

THE PLURALISM OF PAUL TILLICH

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to evaluate Paul Tillich's theological bases for affirming the validity and comparability of the many understandings of reality, especially as they bear on important issues in the theology of religions. The task here is specifically that of identifying Tillich's theology-of-religions position. Is his approach to the religions open enough to be regarded *pluralist*, given Tillich's statements which seem to suggest an 'absolutist' stance and sometimes a 'universalist' one. We discuss relevant theological definitions of Tillich's and his observations of other religions and their important concepts to show that he does not claim superiority for Christianity a priori. Despite his observation of certain unique features of Christianity, he does not put forward criteria from Christianity and show that other religions do not satisfy them. His criteria, actually, are *formal* and derive from (1) his larger definition of religion as ultimate concern, (2) the type-determining elements of religion, and (3) the nature of religious symbols. Tillich's concept of religion indicates his pluralist stance by reason of its identification and treatment of "motives" present in the "prereligious and religious life" of humans, including secular movements which have a religious source. The type-determining elements, namely the sacramental, the mystical and the ethical, are seen as uniting differently to embody themselves in various forms in the concrete religions, thereby providing a religious typology that would facilitate understanding in intra-religious and inter-religious contexts. This typology therefore affirms the *uniqueness* of *every* religion, and the important role of historical and cultural determinants in the making of the special forms. So Tillich's apologetic intent, which drives him to show Christianity as having actualized the various typological elements, despite distortions which Christianity, like any other religion, cannot avoid, is that of demonstrating the nature and dynamics of religion *from one example*, namely Christianity, rather than that of claiming Christian superiority. We find that both Tillich's concept of religion and his religious typology point in the direction of the pluralist paradigm on account of its provision of the frame in which the *unity* or *common basis* and the *plurality* of religions can be appreciated.

Through the significance he attaches to symbols in respect of religion and theology, Tillich is able on the one hand to point out that one symbol can express a number of rational meanings (the many articulations of a single symbol in its long or short history), and on the other to demonstrate that symbols manifest a concrete-universal character. The symbol is concrete in that it belongs to a specific religio-cultural tradition, and it is universal in that it refers to self-transcendence, which then is the basis of judging the limitations of each spiritual act. It is in this light that the concepts Tillich uses in elaborating his theology of religions, such as 'Christ the Criterion' and 'Protestant Principle', should be taken. Then they no longer suggest Christian superiority, but reflect the concrete-universal character ('Christ the Criterion') and especially the judging character ('Protestant Principle') of a religious symbol. Symbols therefore demand theological criticism and consequently theological reconstruction.

Tillich's theological method is discussed to appreciate the dialectic character that Tillich sees in the religious substance itself and in the experience and analysis of the religious phenomenon. It is found that the correlation that Tillich maintains between the universal and the concrete in his theology of culture and his systematic theology is present in Tillich's analysis of the various expressions of other religions. In respect of the world religions, as a "mediating theologian" his attempt is to affirm and develop both sides of a correlation, the correlation between the Christianity and the religion(s) encountered. Hence his boundary situation between Christianity and the world religions and quasi-religions, a boundary that offers a new opportunity to save kerygma from narrowness and to revive religious symbols through an "interpenetration of systematic theology and the history of religions". It is suggested that his pluralism is a "dialectical pluralism", which engages in a dialectical analysis of the universal and concrete in Christianity and other religions.

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that all quotations have been distinguished by either quotation marks or indentations and all the sources of information have been duly acknowledged.

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THE PLURALISM OF PAUL TILLICH

INTRODUCTION

Paul Tillich saw theology as having a task beyond showing the coherence and significance of the religious symbols of one's own tradition in a given historical situation. Working at a time when it was more common for the Christian theologian to suggest the aims of, and terms on which, dialogue should be carried out with other religions than to be engaged in dialogue itself, Tillich ventured to be involved in actual conversations with masters and scholars of other religions and has shown relatively briefly the importance of the concepts of other faiths for a more 'dialogical' or 'comparative' or 'pluralistic' theology,¹ which also speaks to the situation. It can be said legitimately of Tillich that he took seriously and responded to the fact of religious pluralism, of the presence and co-existence of various faiths in a time when the world was rapidly moving (and is continuing to move) towards a universal history. No wonder Wilfred Cantwell Smith's verdict on Tillich has been countered by Hughes: "Future historians will perhaps recognize Tillich as a watershed figure who aided the Christian theological escape from the corporate subjectivism of the West."² Earlier, Eliade remarked "that Tillich's influence will prove to be more powerful and stimulating after his death".³ Parrinder recalls (with appreciation) Tillich's plea for "a

¹Here "pluralistic" demands that Christian theology develop fuller understanding and articulation of religion as ultimate concern, identified and pursued in similar and different ways by people of other faiths, through study of and contact with these faiths. This enterprise is also designated as 'comparative theology' by Neville (Robert C. Neville, *Behind the Masks of God: An Essay Toward Comparative Theology*, Albany: State University of New York, 1991) and Ward (Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). Tillich himself did not go beyond a Christian theology that responded to the interreligious situation, as we shall see.

²Edward J. Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology for the World*, London: SCM, 1986, p.165.

³Mircea Eliade, "Paul Tillich and the History of Religions" in Paul Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, Jerald C. Brauer (ed.), New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p.35. Hereafter cited as Tillich, *FR*.

vision of the spiritual presence in other expressions of the ultimate meaning of man's existence", while commending John Dunne's *The Way of All the Earth*.⁴ Showing to what extent Tillich *actually* influenced future thinking in this regard, however, falls outside the scope of this study, as the attempts here are that of coming to grips with Tillich's pluralism and of evaluating it. Tillich's earlier *recognition of*, and later *proclamation of*, "the significance of the history of religions for the systematic theologian",⁵ with the suggestion of the "interpenetration" of both disciplines, is the basis for reviewing Tillich's writings to appreciate the ways in which and the extent to which his proposal has been carried out by him as a means of appreciating his pluralism. Further, the fact that some recent surveys in the theology of religions classify Paul Tillich as a pluralist⁶ on the one hand, and that others see him as an inclusivist⁷ on the other hand, calls for a thorough examination of Tillich's approach in the light of current thinking in theology of religions. The offer by Tillich of some basic principles to view the *mutual* relationship between religions, without any sustained effort on his part to show the connection between his somewhat tentative theology of religions and his systematic theology has left him open to much criticism. This study argues that although Tillich's theology claims that Christian theology's answers to the existential questions of human existence are more adequate than those of other religions, a dialectic tension between a concrete religious form and the universal or

⁴G. Parrinder in his introduction in John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: An Encounter with Eastern Religions*, London: Sheldon Press, 1973, p.xv.

⁵The title of Tillich's last public lecture, included in Tillich, *FR*.

⁶Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, London: SCM, 1983, p.71.

⁷Langdon Gilkey, *Through the Tempest: Theological Voyages in a Pluralistic Culture*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, p.182; Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes to Other Religions*, London: S.C.M., 1985, pp.xiii,103; John Hick, Review of Glynn Richards' *Towards a Theology of Religions* in *Religious Studies*, 26 (1990), p.176 and Gavin D'Costa, *Theology of Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp.12,16.

formal religious principle underlies Tillich's theology to save this theology from absolutism.

The task of identifying Tillich's pluralism involves investigating whether Tillich recognized the uniqueness of the concepts of other religions while using systematic and analytical principles to understand and interpret them. The way Tillich acknowledges the validity of various religious experiences, understandings of them and their common basis will be examined in order to ascertain his theology of religions. 'Pluralism' as a paradigm of the theology of religions was not yet in use in his time⁸ but we shall identify concepts and methodological principles in Tillich and test them against criteria that a framework should satisfy in order to be pluralist. As this study itself is an attempt to contribute to a pluralist theology of religions by drawing out Tillich's insights in respect of the concrete and unique character of each religion and in respect of the possibility of identifying some common ground among the religions, no fixed pluralist criteria can be accepted *a priori* to test Tillich's approach. These two general norms which pluralists seek to establish through their special methods and analyses will direct our enquiry to identify Tillich's special concepts, criteria and method.

In Part A, Tillich's *concept of religion*, which is fundamental both for his Christian systematic theology and his appraisal of religious phenomena and beliefs of other religions, will be discussed first, in Chapter I. This will be done in three sections. The first section will identify and explore the relation between his larger and narrower definitions of religion. Tillich's claim that the larger definition of religion is universal

⁸Keith Ward notes that John Hick was the first to use "pluralism" as a position that stood in contrast to exclusivism and inclusivism (Ward, Keith, *A Vision to Pursue: Beyond the Crisis in Christianity*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1991, p.170). 'Pluralism' is also often used synonymously with "plurality" referring to the plurality of religions (Schubert Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?* Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1992, p.3).

will be seen to suggest the religious substance underlying all cultural expressions. So the relation between religion and culture will be discussed next. This will give special insight into the way the religious sphere and the cultural spheres are immanent in each other and hence influence each other in unique ways. This will then lead to the third section, which will appraise the suggestion of Tillich that the concept of religion should include the quasi-religions because their religious source can be identified in historical and systematic terms. The chapter as a whole is an attempt to see the relation between religion and religions through a *systematic* approach, as demanded by Tillich's concept of religion. It will be suggested that this concept, with its affirmation of a *common basis* underlying the *plurality* of religious manifestations, is the key to unravelling Tillich's pluralism.

The focus of the discussion then shifts from the side of religion, that is, the systematic concept, in Chapter I, to the side of the religions, that is, the historical religions and quasi-religions, in Chapter II. The task is that of critically seeing if Tillich's account of the presence of the sacramental, mystical and ethical elements, either manifestly or latently, in all religions, with one of the elements being predominant, is true in the case of the historical religions. The basis of Tillich's religious typology, developed from the dynamics of the three elements mentioned, will be appreciated first. Then the three types based on the predominance of one of the elements will be briefly presented, with some reference to the special historical expressions of the concrete religions. A fourth type, 'Religion of the Concrete Spirit', towards which all the first three types point for their fulfilment, will receive treatment next to see if it fully comprehends the goal and the dynamics within the historical religions on the one hand, and validates the *systematic* concept of religion from the side of the concrete religions on the other hand. The chapter will close with a final section which will evaluate Tillich's typology of religions and show the way in which it lends support to the case for Tillich to be a pluralist. It will be argued that the higher

stage in which all the three typological elements are present is not just a possibility for Christianity, although this stage is described by Tillich from the Christian tradition.

Next (in Part B) we address Tillich's theology of religions more directly. The assumption of the title of the thesis, that pluralism is the most tenable theology-of-religions position, will also be discussed in the course of Part B. First, in Chapter III, we discuss the approaches Tillich rejects. Three broad ones are identified from Tillich's main and well-known works to show certain emphases which he appreciates in each of them. Absolutism and Relativism are identified as polar positions. Universalism as the third position will be seen to be based on what is valid in each of the polar positions. Universalism, which Tillich attributes to the early Christianity, inherits the universal consciousness of the Roman Empire (as against the national consciousness of the city-states) *historically*, and is influenced by the sense of universal justice proclaimed by the prophets of Judaism *theologically*. This position itself divides into two approaches, especially in the modern and contemporary periods: absolutist universalism and relativist universalism. Tillich's appreciation of the positive features in each of the two positions points will serve as the basis for the argument that Tillich's position transcends both these and points in the direction of pluralism.

In reaching this point of identifying some special features, which point in the direction of pluralism, from general principles, we now move on to Chapter IV to discuss Tillich's pluralism by drawing out four important theological criteria relevant to the discussion of his theology-of-religions position. First, *revelation* will be seen as the important theological concept which helps appreciate the epistemological basis of the unique, concrete religious knowledge which comes from each religion. The subject-object relation in terms of which the analysis will be conducted will show how the manifold expressions of the ultimate are valid and meaningful, relative to the

theological circle or spheres of reflection or of praxis. How the divine-human encounter shows the common basis as well as the diversity of religions will be discussed. Second, the nature of the *God* who gives Godself in the encounter, and thereby influences the particular revelatory situation in unique ways, will be discussed. While every concept of God will be seen to have both concreteness and transcendence or universality, one of them will be prominent in a particular conception of God. The determining character of the typological element prominent in the particular religious tradition and other factors relevant to the revelatory situation will be found as responsible for the diversity in understanding God. The appreciation of the concrete and universal elements in God anticipates a Christology which will share the same elements, but in a different way.

In the third section we discuss the role of the central symbol in a religion. This symbol for Christianity is the symbol of the Christ. The discussion will proceed in three stages. First, critical phenomenology will show theology's two-fold task present in Tillich's development of every theological concept, particularly the Christological doctrine. The first function is to grasp one's experience or the symbols of one's own tradition in all its concreteness, and the second function is to interpret this experience in universal terms. The way these two functions characterize the Christology will then be discussed under "The Christ, the Foundation of Christianity" and "The Christ, the Centre of History". These two-fold aspects in respect of the Christ on the one hand affirm all revelatory situations, and on the other hand affirm every, or a universal, overcoming of estrangement in the name of the universal Christ, who is the meaning of history. It will be argued that the fact of a universal theological vision or the developing of a formal principle from a concrete standpoint, without losing the tension between the concrete and the universal, points in the direction of pluralism. And fourth, the Protestant Principle, which is basically related to the self-critical function of Tillich's Christology but which is shown by Tillich to be operative in all

religions and secular movements, will be discussed. Tillich's account of the role of this most universal and most concrete principle which protests against the elevation of anything finite to ultimacy in every religion will support the case that Tillich is a pluralist.

Part C will discuss the way Tillich's theological method takes account of various analytical and descriptive methods that focus on the religious reality, either directly as in the case of theology, or indirectly as in the case of philosophy, history and other cultural endeavours. This will help appreciate the way Tillich deals with a plurality of methods. Three correlations are identified in Tillich, which show his attempts to understand and interpret the meaning of the religious reality. The kerygma-situation correlation will discuss Tillich's attempt to discover the eternal message from the traditional religious symbols in the light of the existential questions arising from the situation. This will show Tillich's affirmation of plural forms in which the religious answer is given in a context, but that the answers must be constantly open to judgment. The second correlation, between philosophy and theology, is aimed to provide theology with a theoretical frame that is supposed to approximate to the universal frame of being. The third correlation, between the systematic and the historical, is Tillich's attempt to examine the question of meaning asked in the present in the light of meaning as contained in the universal structure of being, which has been approximated by various religious traditions and worldviews. All three correlations show Tillich's use of the dialectic method to hold together the concrete and the universal, without absolutizing or relativizing of either side. Pluralism here refers to the various forms and actualizations, which are not simply evaluated on the basis of a static frame. Nevertheless the proper significance and meaning of the forms is affirmed only in terms of finding the connection between the universal structure of being and the concrete forms. This pluralism, which is analytical and dialectical, without surrendering either side of the dialectic, is designated "dialectical pluralism".

PART A

RELIGION AND RELIGIONS

This part focuses on Tillich's attempt at a definition of religion that is *common* to all concrete, historical religions, and also focuses on his descriptions of the *common* elements which are present in the concrete religions but expressing themselves in varying importance. The definition is claimed to be universally valid by Tillich, and he puts it in a dialectical relation with the vast data that the concrete religions contain. A study that dialectically focuses on the definition and the concrete phenomena of the religions is suggested by Tillich to be most fruitful. So in Chapter I, we discuss this point in terms of the larger and narrower definitions of religion. The fact that the narrower definition testifies to the role of cultural forms in a concrete religion will demand an analysis of religion (as substance) and culture (as form). The religion-culture analysis includes quasi-religions, because the religious dimension is implicit. So the concept of religion is, for Tillich, an attempt to deal with the plurality of religious manifestations. It will be argued that the larger definition's uniting and judging role in relation to the concrete religions is an affirmation of pluralism, because no one religion or no criteria from any philosophy of religion is used to bring together the concrete religions. The two-way religion-religions analysis allows a mutual dynamic between the *common basis* and *unique features* of the religions and quasi-religions.

In Chapter II, Tillich's typology of religion will be discussed, pointing out how the central object of theology, namely the holy, is experienced and expressed in different ways. Two basic elements which characterize the holy, corresponding to the vertical and horizontal as observed in the religion-culture correlation in Chapter I, will be discussed. What is special here is that the two elements are related to a revelatory object or symbol. The dynamics of the two elements in relation to the revelatory symbol, the dangers the symbol is prone to and the critical ways in which

the meaning and significance of the symbol is reestablished together make up the basic structure and dynamics of the typology. In what ways the revelatory symbol, which affirms the fact of universal revelation, the critical movements of mystical religion and ethical religion, which arise to counter the distortion in the revelatory symbol, and the possibility of all three elements coming together suggest a pluralism in Tillich will be discussed.

CHAPTER I

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION

The increasing awareness of the plurality and the variety of religious forms has raised serious questions not only about the procedure of offering a definition of religion at the start of an enquiry but also about the possibility of arriving at an inclusive definition which captures the essential emphases and structures of the many concrete religions. The procedure of starting with a definition has been pointed out by Hick as a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century approach. Hick also doubts the possibility of a viable definition of religion because of the immense difficulty of including "religious definitions", based on the fact of *plural* and *diverse* human responses to the ultimate, and "naturalistic definitions" in which religion is seen as a pure human activity or state of mind, in a "religious interpretation of religion". However, Hick sees Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern as a *basic* religious definition of religion.¹ But in contrast to Hick's appreciation of the important but limited scope of Tillich's definition, which takes account of concrete religions defining themselves on the one hand and humanistic studies defining religious behaviour and institutions on the other hand, we shall see that Tillich's attempt is one involving the defining of culture itself. The fact that the cultural dimensions imply the religious ground, will suggest the possibility of a *formal* definition of religion informed by the concrete expressions of religion in culture. There is another concern about the validity of a definition of religion: it is most likely that a definition of religion will be more representative of the religion of the theologian concerned, and not representative of all religions. This criticism is appreciated both by Tillich and by this study, as will be seen shortly. Nevertheless the concept of religion is the starting

¹John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 16, n.3 and pp. 1-4.

point of this study for three main reasons. The first has to do with Tillich's statement about the need for a "systematic" discussion of the nature of religion in respect of its many forms. "Systematic" here does not stand for a logical or deductive approach, but suggests the possibility of showing how a core understanding of the nature of religion is present in the concrete religions (or rather religious expressions) in a positive, negative or modified way. Tillich does appreciate that "life is a continuum and [that] all functions and all productions are in a continuous change", and so seeking a final definition in any of the human disciplines is a futile attempt. Yet for a meaningful enquiry into the proper subject matter, limits have to be put "between the different functions in spite of their overlapping" and similarly "between the ever changing productions".² A definition does nothing but identify these limits. Second, our early discussion of Tillich's definition of religion and the related issues will prove immensely fruitful, as we have gained some idea of his key concepts and analytical processes. And third, Tillich's concept of religion makes an important contribution to the cumulative arguments towards seeing him as a pluralist.

The discussion will proceed in three stages. First, the bases of and connections between Tillich's different definitions (or descriptions of various aspects) of religion will be spelt out in order that an overall picture of Tillich's understanding of religion might emerge. Second, the dynamic relationship between religion and culture as proposed by Tillich will be discussed in order to appreciate a fundamental, essential bond between religion and culture. And third, we shall examine the legitimacy of including quasi-religions in the concept of religion. Their relationship with the religions proper at the point of their original emergence in particular will provide the basis for critiquing them on the one hand, and for mutual reconceptions of the structure of reality on the other hand.

²Paul Tillich, *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, Terence Thomas (ed.), Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p.4 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *ERQR*).

1. Defining Religion

Tillich often defines religion and does so in a few significant ways to serve different purposes, which include elaborating what religion is, appreciating religion from different dimensions and standpoints, and showing how corruptions arise in a concrete religion. In his three exclusive treatments of the question of Christianity's relationship with other religions and quasi-religions, namely his Matchette Lectures, Bampton Lectures and a Seminar on "the problems raised by the encounter of major religious systems: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu; and the quasi-religious movements: Nationalism, Socialism, Fascism, Communism",³ he begins with a definition of religion, pointing out that it can only be a "preliminary definition". As such the definition "is open and can be developed from generation to generation", because the "definition itself is a part of the development of the reality of which it is a concept".⁴ The purpose of the definition is thus expressed here, which is that of identifying religion in as broadly a way as possible so that it can be appreciated in all its specific forms. In fact there is a two-fold purpose: first, the definition leads the enquirer to the reality that s/he should focus on and comprehend in all its complexity, and second, it should result in its own content becoming clarified and more fully defined (and revised if necessary). These observations take seriously the question whether the *realities* on which Tillich casts his eyes are the *world religions* as they express themselves and not as filtered through Christian categories.

³The lectures were delivered in 1958 and 1961 respectively, and the seminar was conducted in the Spring of 1963 in the University of California, Santa Barbara and published as (following the same order):

Paul Tillich, *ERQR*. (First published only in 1990, together with another lecture on "Christian and Non-Christian Revelation" and transcriptions of three recorded conversations between Paul Tillich and Hisamatsu Shin'ichi.)

Tillich, Paul, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *CEWR*).

Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, D. Mackenzie Brown (ed.), New York: Harper & Row, 1965 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *UC*).

⁴Tillich, *ERQR*, p.5.

The frequently used definition (or concept) of religion, which is also his *basic* or *larger* definition, features in Tillich's treatment of the world religions:

Here we have the concept of religion which helps us to understand the encounter of the world religions... Religion is ultimate concern or unconditional concern. It is concern about the ultimate or the unconditional in meaning and being. It is ultimate concern, ultimate seriousness.⁵

Through such a definition Tillich intends to show that religion or faith is "basic and universal". Hence he challenges "the idea that world history is the battlefield between faith and un-faith".⁶ Religion in its primary sense is present in human life, but could be left unaddressed or confused:

There is no human being or group or period entirely unconcerned with their own being and meaning. But there are individuals and societies in which this concern is not admitted to full awareness and full expression. This is our situation. We are not irreligious; no man can be irreligious if religion means being ultimately concerned. But we confuse ultimates with important or unimportant preliminaries. We try to hide our own religious concern from ourselves and from others.⁷

Religion is thus a *universal* experience, "for everything that is participates in being-itself, and everybody has some awareness of this participation, especially in the moments in which he experiences the threat of non-being."⁸ So even those who are no longer influenced by traditional religions and are in a state of religious indifference cannot remain unconnected with the religious principle for long, because they will be

⁵Tillich, *ERQR*, p.12; Tillich, *UC*, pp.4,6; P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. by Kimball, Robert C., New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. pp.7-8 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *TC*).

⁶P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.3, Digswell Place: James Nisbet & Co., 1964, p.139 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *ST III*).

⁷Tillich, "Anxiety-Reducing Agencies in our Culture" in P. Tillich, *Main Works*, Vol.2: Writings in the Philosophy of Culture, ed. by Michael Palmer, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter - Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, 1990, p.242 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *PTMW* 2). As religious reality in the cultural sense is not shared by the greater majority in the Western nations it is possible that there is no religious prompting of ultimate concern. This however does not exclude other ways in which ultimate concern grasps individuals and groups. See P. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957, p.69 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *DF*), for his argument that in the present time 'secular faith' is replacing the different forms of religion, but secular faith is still faith and not "unbelief".

⁸Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, London: Collins (Fontana Library), 1962, p.153.

driven by the religious spirit that appears in quasi-religious forms such as "the desire for liberation from authoritarian bondage, passion for justice, scientific honesty, striving for a more fully developed humanity and hope in a progressive transformation of society in a positive direction".⁹ Such a broad understanding of religion cannot accept an idea of God alone as the basis of religion. An understanding of God, which is common to some concrete religions (especially in their popular affirmations) and present in the minds of secular humanists (though they would deny its truth), is criticized by Tillich, who states that his

concept of religion has little in common with the description of religion as a belief in the existence of a highest being called God, and the theoretical and practical consequences of such a belief. Instead, we are pointing to an existential, not a theoretical, understanding of religion.¹⁰

How *universally* acceptable and how *valid* is Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern can only be ascertained after some further discussion of Tillich's larger concept of religion and after introducing his narrower concept. By proceeding to establish the nature of ultimate concern from a "formal definition of faith",¹¹ Tillich's desire to see religion in universal terms is obvious. Speaking of religion, faith and ultimate concern in identical terms, he suggests that faith is an act in which the *unity* of reason, will and emotion is actualized.¹² So faith is not identified purely as rational or irrational but as including both reason and non-rational strivings, while transcending them.¹³ The state of faith includes both a transcending character and a historical character: "In the ecstasy of faith there is an awareness of truth and of

⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.14. How quasi-religions express ultimate concern and hence the need to include them in the 'concept of religion' will be discussed shortly.

¹⁰Tillich, *TC*, p.40.

¹¹Tillich, *DF*, p.4.

¹²Tillich, *DF*, pp.4-8.

¹³Tillich, *DF*, pp.6-7.

ethical value; there are also past loves and hates, conflicts and reunions, individual and collective influences."¹⁴

Dreisbach's failure to appreciate the universal character of faith in these terms has led him to charge Tillich with inconsistency in respect of the latter's claim that everyone has an ultimate concern. To show this, he first presents one of Tillich's statements on the universality of ultimate concern. This accords with what Tillich states everywhere else, including the following statements that form part of the conclusion of the same work to which Dreisbach refers.

Faith is not a phenomenon beside others, but the central phenomenon in man's personal life, manifest and hidden at the same time... it is universal and concrete.... Faith is an essential possibility of man, and therefore its existence is necessary and universal.... It is the triumph of the dynamics of faith that any denial of faith is itself an expression of faith, of an ultimate concern.¹⁵

But then Dreisbach goes on to quote a passage from Tillich and to argue that if Tillich has described the condition of a person with no ultimate concern to be one of "disintegration" it is "at least logically possible" to have or to be such an existence. And he makes the suggestion that Tillich offers "a plausible foundation for the weaker but still interesting claim that life without an ultimate concern is less than fully human and that there might be a natural tendency to center one's life on some ultimate concern".¹⁶ This is more or less a *functional* interpretation of ultimate concern, and there is an uncertainty about its role in human life. Tillich on the contrary accords ultimate concern *foundational* status, which regards ultimate concern as present in preliminary concerns. This is why ultimate concern can give meaning to every preliminary concern as well as criticize it. Tillich's "formal" definition of faith claims

¹⁴Tillich, *DF*, p.7. Ecstasy, for Tillich means "standing outside of oneself" - without ceasing to be oneself" - with all the elements which are united in the personal center" (*ibid.*).

¹⁵Tillich, *DF*, pp.126-127.

¹⁶D. F. Dreisbach, *Symbols & Salvation: Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Religious Symbols and his Interpretation of the Symbols of the Christian Tradition*, Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1993, p.13.

that ultimate concern is present even in the atheist, for it is the ultimate concern in her/him, which cannot allow any inadequate conceptions of the ultimate to prevail, that s/he attacks the conception of God as "the highest being". With regard to our attempt to see how Tillich qualifies as a pluralist, his insistence on the universality of ultimate concern is significant. If a *common basis* is required for pluralism to be affirmed (an issue that will be discussed later), then Tillich has put forward ultimate concern as an idea (explicit or implicit) common to primal, classical and traditional, and modern cultures.

This claim of the universality of ultimate concern in relation to the various religions will be discussed under "Typology of Religion". But the fact of ultimate concern having different contents for different people and communities, or the idea of the ultimate being immanent in the different ultimate concerns that people have is not properly grasped by Tillich's critics. Dreisbach, following Alston's and Rowe's lead, criticizes Tillich for failing to make a proper distinction between the object of ultimate concern a person chooses and being-itself as the object of ultimate concern.¹⁷ Dreisbach and his company seem to demand an objective, non-existential character of being-itself as distinct from the ultimate concerns of humans which can be identified eventually as nothing more than preliminary concerns. But, for Tillich, there is only one ultimate, being-itself, which expresses itself in many ways, as in the existential passion of the philosopher,¹⁸ in the concern for justice of the prophet, and in the spiritual discipline of the mystic. Ultimate concern stands both for the attitude of the one who is concerned and for the object of her/his concern. "That which is ultimate gives itself only to the attitude of ultimate concern." Being-itself as the object of

¹⁷Dreisbach remarks that "being grasped by an ultimate concern is not obviously the same as being grasped by the ultimate in being and meaning". (D. F. Dreisbach, *Symbols & Salvation*, p.11) Rowe had earlier pointed out that Tillich had "confused a psychological ultimate concern with a metaphysical ultimate" (*ibid.*, p.12).

¹⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.27.

theology reveals its special character by "making us its object whenever we try to make it our object".¹⁹ And as something cannot be object and subject at the same time, the ultimate can only be described as "transcending" both subject and object. As such, being-itself is not encountered through rational means because being-itself precedes the distinction between the rational and irrational. Rather it is experienced in the "unforethinkable fact that we 'are' and not 'are not'". This confidence in one's being is not from oneself, nor received primarily from any other source (religious community, scripture, etc.). The assurance can come only from the "original fact" of "the mystery of being", which in fact "is the ground of the experience of the holy".²⁰ It is this character of transcendence or "unity" of subject and object that makes "ecstatic reason" (or knowledge of the infinite) or revelation possible. The implication of this for theological enquiry is that although being-itself is the object of theological enquiry, the limits are set by the ultimate concern of the enquirer.

The assertion of the relativity of theology based on the experience of the theologian is also an expression of Tillich's pluralist stance in relation to Christian theology and in relation to other religions. The varied (religious) experiences of theologians in their most fundamental level can be seen in terms of the subject-object *structure* of human existence:

on the one hand, *our* being ultimately concerned - the subjective side - and on the other hand, the *object* of our ultimate concern, for which of course there is no other word than "ultimate."²¹

The ultimate does not grasp humans by destroying this structure. In fact, only the ultimate as *unity* of subject and object can preserve this structure and address us in a "total" manner, "no part of ourselves or of our world [being] excluded from it".²²

¹⁹Tillich, *ST*, I, p.12.

²⁰Tillich, *ERQR*, p.11.

²¹Tillich, *UC*, pp.11. (*italics original*) See also *ibid.*, 12, 13, 15.

²²P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, p.12 (hereafter cited as *ST I*).

Maintaining the distinction between the divine and human sides helps save the divine from being a function of the human and the human from being controlled by magical or monarchical power sometimes identified with the divine.

Ultimate concern as discussed so far has taken account of the way Tillich presents it from the framework of his philosophical anthropology and from an epistemological consideration. Now we shall look at the way Tillich treats ultimate concern in relation to the historical religions.

The "content" of ultimate concern takes on a central role in a discussion of ultimate concern as present in the different religions. According to Tillich, the content of ultimate concern is identified or described differently by different communities. As linguistic, cultural and social orderings specific to a community influence both life and thought, ultimate concern will be conceived differently from one community to another. Hence the *diversity* in referring to ultimate concern in the history of religions:

Whether it's a little fetish, a tool used daily by a very primitive tribe, or the *mana* power that permeates all reality, or Olympus, with its Greek gods and every special god there, or the God of Israel who, through prophetic criticism, finally became the word "God", the object is always the same. The object of ultimate concern has many names.²³

The diverse ways of expressing ultimate concern points in the direction of Tillich's *narrower* concept of religion, which concerns the specificity of the religions. The larger concept is present in each concrete religion. The distinction between the larger and narrower concepts is also expressed as the *concept* of ultimate concern (which is universal) and the *content* of ultimate concern (which is specific to each religion) respectively.²⁴ The relation between the the larger and narrower concepts can also be conflicting, as is evident in the expression "the fight of religion against

²³Tillich, *UC*, pp.11-12. "The holy" is another of Tillich's way of representing the larger or all-embracing concept of religion. (See Tillich, *ERQR*, p.10)

²⁴Tillich, *UC*, pp.21-22. See also Tillich, *ST III*, p.110.

religion",²⁵ where religion in the larger sense fights the self-absolutizing tendency in certain aspects of the life of a concrete religion. This point will be discussed shortly (under "Religion and Culture").

The narrower concept stands for *specificity*, which in the context of many cultures means a *plurality* of the manifestations of ultimate concern. The larger definition is more an affirmation of the truth or reality of religion. It needs the narrower concept for expressing its function in actual life. The holy or ultimate concern can only be described in terms of experiences familiar to the specific culture:

You cannot describe the holy in terms which belong to that realm from which the holy is separated by its very nature. And therefore you need the symbolic language for everything that has to do with the holy. Every religion uses finite material, concepts like life and being and love and power and action and repentance - even God repents in the Old Testament - in order to express the infinite.²⁶

The particularity of symbols to a culture necessarily means the plurality of ways of apprehending ultimate reality. This is spelt out by Tillich in his *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, where religion is regarded as "the name for the reception of revelation". Revelation might have a universal claim but it is always concrete in the way it is received, namely in terms of the personal, social and historical conditions of the receiver.²⁷

If the larger concept takes account of the universal element in religion, then the narrower concept should include the concrete religions in which the universal element is manifest. The concrete religions are classified as *premythological* (when there were not yet gods), *mythological* (the *cultus deorum*) and *postmythological* (when there were no longer gods - Zen Buddhism for example) in the history of

²⁵Tillich, *UC*, p.50.

²⁶Tillich, *ERQR*, p.14.

²⁷P. Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp.3-4 (hereafter cited Tillich, *BRSUR*).

religions. Hinayana Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism, which in their original expressions have no idea of transcendent gods, are still included in Tillich's concept of religion.²⁸ This is so because ultimate concern is present in the "Buddhist way of life, in the Confucian relation to the ancestors, in the Shinto relation to the Emperor."²⁹

Tillich states that a concept of religion should take account of the character of primal religions, and sees his definition as fulfilling this aim. A major difficulty in appreciating the nature of primal religion is the magical worldview that determines it. The magical worldview is a combination of a "primitive" science (and technique) and a religious element. Magic as a primitive technique produces effects without physical contact between the performer and his object. It takes on more than a technique-role when magic causality "becomes causality exercised upon the gods by us and by the gods upon us and others and the whole universe". Magic here includes a religious element in the role of higher powers which are not accountable by the words of magic but in their own terms. Tillich observes that the magical notion invades even the higher religions, and hence the difficulty in excluding the religious element in the magical worldview from any definition of religion.³⁰ The distinction between higher and lower religions in Tillich is that the higher includes a critical element that resists the tendency towards idolatry; this critical element is absent in the lower, sacramental religion, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The classical and traditional religions provide Tillich with the experiential and philosophical basis for his definition of religion. Unlike Hans Küng, who emphasizes the difference the particular religion makes on the followers, almost conditioning

²⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.8,61

²⁹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.13.

³⁰Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.6-8.

them,³¹ Tillich identifies the structure of reality, with ultimate reality as its basis, as common to all religious expressions. So he states: "God is the basic and universal symbol for what concerns us ultimately."³² Although Tillich's preference for theism is evident, it should be taken in the light of certain critical observations of his. Thus, while challenging theologians of the neo-orthodox kind and secularists for their denial of religion from opposite ends, he points out that their mistake lies in the common conception of "religion as man's relation to divine beings", a conception "which makes any understanding of religion impossible".³³ This error, according to Tillich, leads "believers" to affirm the "existence" of the divine on the authority of divine revelation, and the "unbelievers" to deny the "existence" of such a deity. It will suffice to note here what will be discussed under "The Ground of Religion: God" (Chapter IV), namely that *theism is not the only but important* narrower concept for the understanding of ultimate concern.

The importance of denoting the two concepts which Tillich has himself distinguished³⁴ has been stressed by Clayton,³⁵ who represents "ultimate concern" or "depth dimension" as religion₁ and "the religious sphere" alongside other spheres as religion₂. According to Clayton, Tillich is following Hegel, who spoke of "absolute" religion and "specific, existing religions". But we must point out that Tillich is cautious in accepting Hegel's conception in two ways: first, whereas Hegel does not see all ideal elements of religion present in all particular religions, Tillich sees them

³¹For Küng, humans do not have religion as an ornament to being human but that one is human in a Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islamic way. (Hans Küng, "The Debate on the Word Religion" in Hans Küng & Jürgen Moltmann, *Christianity Among the World Religions*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986, p.xii.)

³²Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

³³Tillich, *TC*, 4-5.

³⁴Tillich, *UC*, 4-7; Tillich, *TC*, 7, 9.

³⁵John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980. pp.88-101.

present in all religions, but one of the elements is predominant; and second, whereas Hegel sees absolute religion realized in Christianity alone, Tillich makes such an equation mainly to show *through Christianity* the possibility of a proper and balanced relationship between the typological elements of religion. Further, we must point out that whereas Hegel demands specific religions to fit the predetermined structure, Tillich is ready to see how the universal structure and the specific event imply and qualify each other. Concerning our question of the distinguishing of the larger and narrower concepts of religion, therefore, the issue becomes more acute when one finds that a number of meanings of religion is found in Tillich's typology of religion alone, as we shall see in the next chapter. The larger concept is comprehended in "ideal structures", each structure presenting religion differently. The narrower concept represents the various religions which approximate to these ideal structures in their unique ways. The content of religion in each ideal structure is *different*, thus requiring to be qualified (as "sacramental", "mystical", "ethical" and "religion of the concrete spirit"). Thus in this study only the difference between the larger concept and the narrower concept is denoted by religion in singular and in plural respectively or by a pair of terms - namely, "religion itself" and "religion"- terms Tillich himself has used.³⁶ This brief introduction to the different definitions of religion in Tillich should serve as an aid to identifying the proper meaning of the term religion in its context. This discussion also anticipates Tillich's pluralism, that is, affirming religion in its many unique *historical forms*, seeing within these forms the role of different *typological elements* with one of the elements being predominant, and appreciating all of their having a *common basis in the concept of religion*.

³⁶P. Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. by J. L. Adams, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.248 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *PE*). It might be noted there is a parallel between this pair and the following pair: divine Spirit (capital S) and spirit as the creative life of humans (small s). (Tillich, *ST I*, p.15 n.4) See also *ST III*, p.22.

There are yet other ways in which Tillich defines religion. But they should fall into either one or both of the concepts. One such important definition sees religion as the "direction of the conditioned toward the Unconditioned".³⁷ It puts the emphasis on the human movement toward the divine, while taking for granted that there is a prior divine "grasping" of the human. Ultimate concern is here conceived as a movement from either side towards the other. And although both the movements are important, Tillich consistently holds that divine grasping is more fundamental because it alone is *power of being*, or the power of being-itself reaching every being. This power of being is therefore what humans *receive* rather than are themselves. This also well serves Tillich's intention to be consistent with the (Christian) theological idea of divine initiative, that is, God first loving humans. Religion as movement toward the divine, on the other hand, presupposes the concrete religious symbols, worship, etc., in terms of which the participating individual or religious community moves towards the ultimate. So this definition of religion affirms both the larger and narrower concepts and also shows their relatedness.

An important point that should be noted in connection with the relation between the larger and narrower concepts of religion is that they should be seen in the light of Tillich's Christian *theological interpretation of human existence*. As everything related to humans reflect the predicament of being in a state of separation from (but not total separation as if there were no union with) their essential nature, religion cannot be exempt, for in the first place the idea itself is a religious one. So Tillich sees the sphere of historical religions as a consequence of "the tragic estrangement of man's spiritual life from its own ground and depth".³⁸ Concrete religions also bear the marks of this estrangement. Hence the importance of the larger

³⁷P. Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr, New York: Meridian Books, 1956, p. 158 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *RS*).

³⁸Tillich, *TC*, p. 8. How ultimate concern is present in quasi-religions will be discussed under "Religion in Quasi-religions".

concept of religion for a proper understanding of religion: "Religion itself, however, does not talk about religion, but about God, the world, and the soul."³⁹ The sharp distinction that is made here between the larger and the narrower concepts might suggest that religion in its cultural symbols and rituals does not embody proper understandings of God and of God's relationship with the worlds of humans and nature. This is inevitable because in Tillich's philosophical thought there is a definite separation between the essential and the existential: hence the finite can express the infinite only partially. The same is the case from a theological point of view, for the fallen state of humans suggests the potential danger of granting ultimacy to that which is the bearer of the ultimate. Every specific manifestation of religion, therefore, needs to be criticized: "The first word ... to be spoken by religion to the people of our time must be a word spoken against religion".⁴⁰ This is why deliberate effort must be made by the theologian to attend to the larger concept. There is also a further reason for focusing on the larger concept. Despite the fact that the secular is increasingly becoming more influential on human lives than the religions proper, Tillich claims that everyone has an ultimate concern. And Tillich sees ultimate concern expressed in secular movements too: "The most important religious movements are developing outside of religion."⁴¹ These movements, regarded by him as quasi-religious, are on the one hand positive by bearing the ultimate concern, but on the other negative by becoming radicalized so as to be destructive. Yet the fact is that the larger concept of religion is *common* for the religions proper and the quasi-religions.

Tillich's presentation of the narrower concept as a vehicle of the larger one has been appreciated. The concrete religion is thus important despite the necessity of the constant criticism that must be made on the basis of the larger concept. In fact Tillich

³⁹Tillich, *PTMW* 2, p.210.

⁴⁰Tillich, *PE*, p.185.

⁴¹Tillich, *RS*, p.157.

shows that his larger concept is actually abstracted from a specific experience-cum-expression in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The concept cannot be arbitrarily chosen but "must be developed out of the centre of the actual life of the concrete historical religions".⁴² For the Christian, "ultimate concern" has its source in the Mosaic Law and in the Great Commandment of the New Testament.⁴³ And Tillich points out that ultimate concern in the sense of unconditional concern is found in much earlier times in religious sacrifice, which refers to the sacrifice of all other values for that which is of unconditional value.⁴⁴ Such specific expressions are found in other religio-philosophical traditions, for example in Kant's "moral imperative" and in Advaita Vedanta's "Brahma-consciousness". It might be pointed out that the mutual relationship between the larger and narrower concepts that is evident here saves Tillich's formal definition of religion as ultimate concern from being charged with lacking a concrete basis. This mutuality of the larger and narrower concepts can also be seen to preserve the universal and concrete character of ultimate concern.

One important consequence of this mutuality is that there is *in principle* an openness towards a revision of Tillich's larger definition of religion in the event that the contents of the concrete religions do not endorse it. To what extent Tillich's larger concept is valid and the mutuality of the larger and narrower concepts maintained can be ascertained only after the analyses of the religion-culture correlation, quasi-religions, typology of religion, revelation-religion correlation, God, etc. Hence the

⁴²Tillich, *ERQR*, p.10. One should first participate in the concreteness of the ultimate concern before abstracting it. (*ibid.*, 13-4)

⁴³Tillich, *ST I*, p.11; Tillich, *TC*, p.40; Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.11-12. Tillich observes that there is a *tension* and yet a necessary *relation* between the larger and narrower concepts. He recognizes that a *formal definition* cannot commit itself to a content, though "the content matters infinitely for the life of the believer". So in the great commandment of Judaism (Deut 6:5)(Tillich, *DF*, pp.2-3.) and that of Christianity both one's attitude of 'ultimate concernedness' (loving ... with heart, soul and might) and the 'content of the concern' (the Lord God) are present, thus providing the *concrete* understanding of religion in the two cases.

⁴⁴Tillich, *ERQR*, p.12.

significance of the two concepts will be appreciated in all these analyses and in the three correlations discussed in Chapter V.

We now proceed to examine Tillich's correlation of religion and culture in order to appreciate his larger and narrower concepts in the light of his wider framework for analyzing religion as it is expressed in the religions.

2. Religion and Culture

The principle that "all universals are concretely expressed" is exemplified in the case of the relation between the larger and the narrower concepts of religion. Thus it has been appreciated that religion on the one hand is a universal element, power, structure, in human life, and on the other hand that it is found only as distinct, concrete religions in history, determined by different cultural forms. The relation between religion and culture, therefore, comes to the forefront, and will be seen as having important implications for the religion-religions correlation.

We have seen that the universality of ultimate concern is for Tillich as good as established from his philosophical-anthropological and the Judaeo-Christian "Great Commandment" bases. His understanding of religion as ultimate concern which appears in his treatments of the religion-culture correlation will be highlighted first; his understanding of culture and its importance in his theology will be appreciated next; and finally the correlation itself with the difficulties it gives rise to and its significance for the concept of religion will be discussed.

Ultimate concern as expressed in the "summary of the law" is seen by Tillich to affirm two inseparably related movements, one represented by the metaphor "vertical line" and the other by the metaphor "horizontal line". The first line, the vertical one, symbolizes the attitude of "in spite of" or the state of "religious reservation." The second line, the horizontal one, symbolizes the attitude of "because

of" or a state of "religious obligation."⁴⁵ The "mutual interdependence" of both is affirmed. We can argue that this is the case by pointing out on the one hand that neither of the religious movements can be deduced from the other, and on the other hand that the one implies the other. Religious reservation has the character of transcending the existential and the rational, without eliminating them (as we have seen), and so it cannot be deduced from religious obligation, which has the character of concrete expression of religious life and creativity. Similarly, religious obligation cannot be deduced from religious reservation because no law or answer can be received in a defined, authoritative way from the divine source. Every religious act will have the marks of existential creativity and destructiveness in contrast to the essential, which characterizes the state of religious reservation (actualized only fragmentarily). The fact that religious reservation and religious obligation imply each other is evident from the former's expression within and in terms of the cultural context where religious reservation is actual; and religious obligation implies religious reservation in the event of the former requiring to be valued and critiqued in the light of the latter.

That the one cannot be without the other is also evident in the way Tillich describes the vertical line as the meaning-giving dimension and the horizontal line as the "temporal realization of eternal meaning". The horizontal line must be connected continuously to the vertical line if it is not to become empty, and similarly the vertical line must be connected to the horizontal as "we are not asked to enter the religious reservation [the vertical] in order to stay in it".⁴⁶ One-sidedness expressed as an "*exclusive* surrender to the vertical line (in scepticism) leads to the impossibility of

⁴⁵ Tillich, *PE*, p.186

⁴⁶ Tillich, *PE*, pp.186-189. Tillich uses the Word in the vertical sense when he says: The Word is certainly from beyond us, to us but at the same time becomes "immanent, creating a divine structure of reality". (Tillich, *PE*, p.210)

expressing anything and acting in any direction".⁴⁷ One-sidedness expressed as an "exclusive surrender to the horizontal line (in what one could call "forwardism") leads to the loss of any meaningful content and to complete emptiness".⁴⁸ If the horizontal alone is recognized then God is "put alongside the world", God being made unable to judge the world.⁴⁹ And for Tillich this would mean denying God God's true character. Moreover, the horizontal cannot have complete control of the human situation because "human nature is not expressed in its full potentialities by the horizontal line". So human life will revolt against the predominance of the horizontal.⁵⁰ At the same time the horizontal should not be left unpursued for fear of its tragic consequences. It should be continued "under the criteria coming from the vertical line".⁵¹ And Tillich asserts that even in the present period when the horizontal is the driving force, the human "stature and condition" has not changed so as to be unable to experience the breaking in of the vertical.⁵²

Seeing the vertical and the horizontal in such inseparable terms, Tillich is able to recognize and view positively developments which are horizontal in nature, including those in such specialized fields as astronomy, and identify their theological implications. He sees "the cosmic frame of man's religious self-evaluation" tremendously changed from the idea of the human "as the bearer of the history of salvation for the universe, as the *only* creature in whose nature God could become fully manifest, as he who will experience his own historical end as the end of the universe" to one of accepting "the possibility of other religiously meaningful histories in other parts of the universe, with other beings in whom God could have become

⁴⁷ P. Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, ed. by Jerald C. Brauer, New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 46 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *FR*).

⁴⁸ Tillich, *FR*, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Tillich, *TC*, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁰ Tillich, *FR*, p. 51.

⁵¹ Tillich, *FR*, p. 47.

⁵² Tillich, *FR*, p. 48.

fully manifest for them, with another beginning and another end".⁵³ This changed worldview is the source of relativism, which affirms the validity of each system and its unique character of representing the world for itself. But at the same time Tillich believes that there is a basic structure which underlies varying interpretations of reality. So, from a theological perspective, he affirms that the new cosmic frame with which humans are familiar "has not changed the divine-human relationship which had been experienced and symbolically expressed" in the earlier frames.⁵⁴ This confidence of Tillich in regard to a fundamental theological structure is essential for his pluralist hypothesis. It will suffice here to say that Tillich's basis for such a claim is the identification of the structure of *polar elements* united in their *ground*, which underlies any theory of reality or existence (being-nonbeing) or theory of knowledge (subject-object) or theory of symbols (conditional-unconditional).

The mutuality of the vertical and the horizontal is consistently affirmed by Tillich. But he does impose an order of priority between the two in terms of their functions. He says: "Religion is, first, an open hand to receive a gift and, second, an acting hand to distribute gifts."⁵⁵ The vertical for him symbolizes one's relationship with being-itself, a relationship which affirms the dependence of individual, society and all reality on being-itself, and the judging character of being-itself. The idea of a vertical relationship between God and humans has been criticized by Page for its failure to affirm a *mutual* relationship between God and humans; a consequence of this failure is its hindrance to the cause of liberationist theologies, because liberationist theologies demand a rejection of all hierarchical models. Page calls for a change of emphasis from God's omnipotence, which is synonymous with the hierarchical, to God's omnipresence, and suggests that God's "infinite transcendence radiates out from

⁵³Tillich, *FR*, p.48.

⁵⁴Tillich, *FR*, p.48.

⁵⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.188.

every given present", *attracting* humans to Godself.⁵⁶ God's judging nature is not stressed so much in Page as in Tillich; rather, God showing Godself in a positive relationship and seeking to influence humans by being *beside* them "as a presence of good, justice and beauty" is suggested as a more viable approach.⁵⁷ That Tillich's transcendence-immanence idea is an affirmation of the immediacy of God to humans, an idea which corresponds to what is here demanded, will be discussed in Chapter IV.

It must now be observed that Tillich's two-fold description of religion in terms of the vertical and horizontal is actually synonymous with the religion-culture correlation, the vertical being identical with religion and the horizontal with culture. The vertical-horizontal correlation and the religion-culture correlation appear different because they arise from different sources. The vertical-horizontal derives from the Great Commandment of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, where both the vertical and horizontal stand for religious acts. As we have seen, the Godward movement is more fundamental, for it is nothing but an affirmation of the divine presence in the human. The human-to-human movement is also equally important and has "religious" significance, for religious obligation requires transformation at all levels, especially in one's relationship to others. The religion-culture correlation, on the other hand, arises from Tillich's theological enterprise which seeks to consider worldviews and situations beyond the boundaries of the Christian tradition, which Tillich testifies as having engaged him throughout his career.⁵⁸ This is his concern with culture, not just as a source of theology but as a necessary *part* of the theological function itself. We shall show how Tillich sees culture in terms of ultimate concern, despite each cultural act -

⁵⁶Ruth Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God*, London: S.C.M., 1985, pp.137-139.

⁵⁷R. Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God*, pp.141-142.

⁵⁸In his Foreword to '*The Theology of Culture*', which is a collection of some of his papers over the years, he states that the papers of the volume were consistent with the title of his first published speech "*Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kulture*" and that the forty years of his theological career had been devoted to understanding and explaining the religious dimension of culture.

the technical, cognitive, aesthetic, moral and religious (and also language which is present in each of these⁵⁹) - having its own inner aim and dynamics. This shows that for Tillich culture is identical with the horizontal movement of religion.

Culture is primarily taken in its root meaning of "that which takes care of something, keeps it alive, and makes it grow".⁶⁰ In his emphasis on the *change* or *growth* that humans produce on the encountered realities, Tillich is taking note of J.G. Herder's understanding of culture as the "historical self-development of humanity",⁶¹ without, however, falling into Herder's and Hegel's idea of steady universal progress (through conflict) guaranteed by "divine providence" or "world spirit".⁶² Tillich sees developing "something new" as the aim of culture in all their distinct functions, "materially, as in the technical function; receptively, as in the functions of *theoria*; or reactively, as in the functions of *praxis*".⁶³ All these functions presuppose that a human person, as a "developed self",⁶⁴ has a *world* before her/him, world being the experiencing of something universal in everything particular.⁶⁵ One's relationship to one's world is in two ways: *theoria* and *praxis*. These correspond to the *two basic functions* (the *logos* and the technical act) of culture, which are based on the ontological polarity of individualization and participation.⁶⁶ The ontological elements

⁵⁹Tillich says: "Logos precedes everything. If man is called *homo faber*, he is implicitly called *anthropos logikos*, i.e., man who is determined by the logos and who is able to use the meaningful word." (Tillich, *ST III*, p.65)

⁶⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.61.

⁶¹Delwin Brown, *Boundaries of Our Habitations: Tradition and Theological Construction*, Albany: State Univ. of New York, 1994, p.61. Brown himself understands culture as a social concept reflecting the processes of change - such as process and structure, dissolution and construction, past and present, action and givenness, etc., and without the progressivism of Herder. (*ibid.*, pp.66-7)

⁶²J. P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: The Possibility of a Mediating Theology*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980, pp.130-133.

⁶³Tillich, *ST III*, p.61.

⁶⁴Only humans have the quality of being a fully centred being in contrast to other beings, which lack both centredness and individualization. (Tillich, *ST III*, pp.34-35).

⁶⁵Tillich, *ST III*, p.61.

⁶⁶Tillich, *ST III*, pp.61-72.

of individualization and participation are not just applicable to any special realm but characterize everything, every being.⁶⁷ Individualization is the affirmation of one's unique identity.

Individualization points to that which is self-centered, which, in other words, is particular. As self-centered it resists being merged into the universal. The degree to which something is self-centered determines its capacity to maintain its own identity in an infinite variety of relations.⁶⁸

This element is reflected in the biblical creation accounts in which God creates individuals and not universals.⁶⁹ The other element, participation, is evident in one's communion with another individual self in order that one might become a person oneself - becoming a person requiring communion with the other and consequently resistance from that other. So individualization and participation need each other: "Without individualization nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality."⁷⁰ And only in their mutual striving, the elements reach their perfect forms: "When individualization reaches the perfect form which we call a 'person', participation reaches the perfect form which we call 'communion'."⁷¹ We might suggest here that Tillich's use of the two ontological categories helps him to affirm his fundamental view of the distinct identity of culture, such that culture is not subjected to any normative theological system.⁷²

The two basic cultural functions, namely the technical act and the Word correspond to individualization and participation respectively. The technical function regards the encountered object as a thing for one's "handling" (*Zuhandensein* - "being at disposal" - in Heidegger) to reach ends, which may in turn become means to other

⁶⁷Tillich, *ST I*, pp.174-175.

⁶⁸Tillich, *PTMW I*, p.382.

⁶⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.174.

⁷⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.177.

⁷¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.176.

⁷²See P. Tillich, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, ed. by Mark Kline Taylor, London: Collins, 1987, pp.38-39 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *PTTB*).

ends. The danger of the technical function is that of making the production of means as an end in itself, with no reference to the inner aims of organic processes, or more importantly with no recognition of any ultimate end. The other function is that of the Word, which represents a cognitive relationship with reality (*Vorhandensein* - "being in existence" - in Heidegger).⁷³ These two functions then come into play in the dimension of spirit as individuals or groups related to her/his/their world. The *logos* function now expresses itself as the act of *receiving* the encountered reality as a structured whole into one's centred self. Tillich calls this act *theoria*, and sees its aim as that of "truth", which is a fragmentary realization of the union of subject and object in the act of knowledge, and "authentic expressiveness", where not just the subjectivity of the individual or the object without the depth dimension appears but also a hidden aspect of the universe united with a "hidden receptive power of the mind" appears. On the other hand, the technical function now expresses itself in the act of *reacting* to the encountered world and finding the appropriate "tools" to transform various parts of it. Tillich calls this act *praxis*, which aims at the fulfilment of the essential human potentialities at the personal level and at the attainment of universal justice in the social level.⁷⁴

From this account of culture in Tillich, it is possible to see that there is a consistent picture of a polarity in the structure of reality and in the performance of cultural acts. Identity and separation at the one end, and communion and participation at the other end determine the nature of reality as well as every cultural act. It must be pointed out that although both polar elements are present in each act, in their concrete actualization one of the elements is predominant. Thus in an exercise of the technical function, separation is predominant, with participation present as the subject-object encounter; and in a cognitive approach to reality as a whole, participation is

⁷³Tillich, *ST* III, pp.61-66.

⁷⁴Tillich, *ST* III, pp.66-72.

predominant, with separation characterizing the concrete standpoint of the individual.⁷⁵ These two tendencies in culture will be seen to have significance for understanding the nature of concrete religions, presented by Tillich in a religious typology (Chapter II). But now we must show how these two tendencies influence the religion-culture correlation.

Religion is presupposed by the two basic cultural functions. This approach of affirming and understanding religion from the side of culture can be regarded to justify Tillich's claim to be a "theologian of culture", but more importantly we can place him among those doing *theology from below*. This is possible because first, Tillich does not claim for religion or God a supranatural status (meaning an *actual* realm beyond the natural world), and second, he proceeds to develop a theological concept from concrete human experiences and from general principles identified in those experiences. The definition of religion as self-transcendence of life in the dimension of the spirit has the decisive implication that religion must first of all be considered as a quality of the two other functions of the spirit (cultural and moral) and not itself as a function. At the same time, his is not a theology from below that subsumes the religious substance under culture:

Substance cannot be intended. It is unconsciously present in a culture, a group, an individual, giving the passion and driving power to him who creates and the significance and power of meaning to his creations.⁷⁶

So religion cannot be fully defined by culture and assigned a special sphere within culture. Nor can religion be regarded just as "an effect of changing psychological and sociological conditions", for religion is "a *necessary aspect* of man's spiritual life".⁷⁷

⁷⁵Tillich states that "the scientific type of thought favors the side of separation while the metaphysical type favors the side of participation." (Paul Tillich, *Main Works*, Vol.1: Philosophical Writings, Gunther Wenz (ed.), Berlin and New York: De Gruyter - Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmnH, 1989,p.384. Hereafter cited as Tillich, *PTMW* 1.

⁷⁶Tillich, *ST* III, p. 64.

⁷⁷Tillich, *TC*, p.3 (italics added).

"Religion is the substance, the ground, and the depth of man's spiritual life."⁷⁸ Religion or the religious element is to be seen, for Tillich, not as a special function, capacity or dimension of humans but as the *depth* of all functions, capacities or dimensions of humans. "Spiritual life" and all creative (and destructive) acts of the different human dimensions are represented by culture.

We must now see whether Tillich convincingly argues that religion is present in every human dimension or cultural act but as transcending it. Tillich claims that the cognitive, aesthetic, social and political are rooted in the spiritual.⁷⁹ If "mythological imagination" and "mystical intuition" do not suggest religion as having a *cognitive* element and transcending it at the same time, then cognition gains control of religion and demands that religious knowledge subject itself to the criteria of pure knowledge. This leads to religion receiving the judgment of science-dominated pure knowledge that religious knowledge is invalid.⁸⁰ Similarly, if religion does not have some element of otherness in relation to the *aesthetic* function while being present in it, it will be seen as consecrating all art, which is absurd. Tillich points out that religion has to transcend the aesthetic function and influence other functions at the same time. Only then can it do more than art's task of expressing reality, by transforming reality. Thus religion's connections with the causes of "the good" and "the true", and not just with the aesthetic function, should be appreciated. Another function with which religion is related in a transcending manner is the *moral* one. Religion maintains its transcending character as long as religion sees the moral as one of its special functions and does not fall into the trap of serving the cause of the ethical in the social and political spheres. Religion should lead not just to the performing of an ethical function but to a critical

⁷⁸Tillich, *TC*, p.8.

⁷⁹Tillich, *DF*, p.1.

⁸⁰See Tillich, *TC*, p.6. For Tillich "the mind of man is necessary for religion", for it "is the place we know in the universe...where the relationship to the ground of being comes to awareness, and produces great movements which we call religion".(Tillich, *UC*,13)

function towards the ethical itself.⁸¹ Finally, *feeling* as an element that goes with all the spiritual functions has in the history of religions been regarded as arising from a religious source. But if feeling claimed that religion could be identified with feeling itself, then religion would cease to have relevance for theoretical and moral discourses, because of being assigned to the realm of the private and subjective along with feeling.⁸² Nor is religion a particular psychic function.⁸³ The fact of religion being connected with and at the same time transcending each of the human spiritual functions shows that religion belongs to the "depth" dimension, from which it could inspire and criticize each of the human functions. This "dimension of the ultimate" is, however, spoken about only *symbolically* when applied to God and *metaphorically* when distinguished from other human functions. There is therefore no "dualism of levels", all dualistic terminology being only "preliminary" and "transitory". Tillich suggests correlation as the adequate approach to deal with the relation of the depth dimension to the other dimensions because negatively it resists the dualism of levels, and positively it witnesses to "the human spirit's essential relation to the divine Spirit", where there is no correlation but "mutual immanence".⁸⁴

The unity of all these cultural dimensions in the depth dimension is also the basis of Tillich's "philosophy of meaning", expressed in terms of a religion-culture correlation:

Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion.⁸⁵

⁸¹See Tillich, *TC*, 6.

⁸²See Tillich, *TC*, p.7.

⁸³Tillich, *PTTB*, p.39.

⁸⁴See Tillich, *ST III*, p.121.

⁸⁵Tillich, *TC*, p.42; Tillich, *IH*, p.50. See Tillich, *What is Religion?* New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969, p.60 (hereafter cited as *WR*): "In the cultural act ...the religious is substantial; in the religious act the cultural is formal."

Such a 'simple' correlation claiming to bring all the human disciplines into an essential relationship with theology calls for a rigorous consideration. This becomes more important for a study of Tillich's pluralism in the light of his claim that through a "philosophy of meaning" he would be able to dialogue with and comprehend any historical religion.⁸⁶

Both religion and culture is seen by Tillich to be concerned about meaning, but to differ in regard to the kind of meaning each seeks:

If consciousness is directed toward the particular forms of meaning and their unity, we have to do with *culture*, if it is directed toward the unconditioned meaning, toward the import of meaning, we have *religion*.⁸⁷

And Tillich points out that religion and culture have their common basis in their focus on the unity of meaning.⁸⁸ Morgan rightly suggests "meaning" as the concern of both religion and culture in his comparison of Tillich and Geertz, and proposes the possibility of fruitful exchange between theology and anthropology, noting the complementarity of the two disciplines:

Whereas Geertz says anthropology does not seek to understand the "basis of belief" *but, rather*, belief's manifestations, Tillich says that theology is an address to the basis of belief *by means of* belief's religious and cultural manifestations.⁸⁹

It should however be borne in mind that for Tillich, the basis of belief of a particular culture cannot be identified in any definitive way because as we saw earlier, religion does not have its own object or analytical tools. For Tillich, unconditioned meaning, or better "the unconditioned source and abyss of meaning", only gets designated⁹⁰ in an enquiry from the side of religion, but has no form of its own to be expressed in

⁸⁶Paul Tillich, *WR*, p.22.

⁸⁷Tillich, *WR*, p.59. (Italics added)

⁸⁸Tillich, *WR*, pp.60-66.

⁸⁹John Morgan, "Religion and Culture as Meaning Systems: A Dialogue between Geertz and Tillich", *Journal of Religion*, 57:4 (Oct. 1977), p.373. See also *ibid.*, pp.363-375.

⁹⁰Tillich, *IH*, p.50.

essential terms. Any criticism of conditioned meaning on behalf of unconditioned meaning can only mean a new substance-form relation producing a new conditioned meaning which is more transparent to unconditioned meaning. Here again, we meet Tillich's case for *plural correlations* within a historical religion and among religions and cultures, without any one of the correlations being definitive and hence superior to others. Thus we see in one way Tillich's pluralist stance in regard to theological pluralism and religious pluralism.

Pluralism, however, should not mean sacrificing anything vital to a particular religion for the sake of an overall concept. So Tillich is open to criticism from the side of religion, especially from those who see Christian doctrine in literal and normative terms. Hamilton criticizes those, including Tillich, who speak of religion as 'meaning', for recognizing meaning in religion *generally* and refusing to see meaning in its "definite" and unique Christian sense.⁹¹ Such criticism of Tillich is unwarranted because Tillich's larger definition is meaningful for the Christian from her/his *concrete* appreciation of the presuppositions (e.g., the availability and reception of the New Being) and implications (e.g., the act of transforming personal and social realities as professed by the symbol Kingdom of God) of the Great Commandment.

Ways in which religion is over-emphasized as against culture have been observed, and why the religion-culture correlation resists them has been shown by Tillich. The substance character of religion is constantly forgotten, and it is often considered form. When this happens, a further step is taken by religion, especially in the ecclesiastical context, to claim superiority for its form. But once religion has surrendered its substance character it has to share the destiny of form, which is that of competing at the same level with the forms of secular culture. And religion as form

⁹¹Kenneth Hamilton, *God is Dead: The Anatomy of a Slogan*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1966, p.28.

will gradually lose its importance. In order to save itself from this situation, religion as form becomes intolerant and claims superiority for itself and its various expressions (rituals, institutions, etc.) on the basis of an "authority" it gives to itself. And Tillich points out that this happened in sectarian movements, fundamentalism and the Roman church.⁹² The authority a concrete religion or a church claims for itself is however due to the transference of ultimacy and absoluteness from the substance character of religion to the form character of religion.⁹³ Hence, Tillich asserts the proper character of the religion-culture correlation in his 1919 presentation at the Kant Society in Berlin: "the religious principle only exists in connection with cultural functions outside the sphere of religion". Any attempt at domesticating the religious principle in the religious sphere and competing with the various cultural systems would mean a double system of values and existence, thereby fated with no actualization of the religious principle in culture.⁹⁴

Tillich's concept of religion requires, and benefits from, this limitation that he puts on the religious sphere in the name of religion as substance, because the concept allows religious elements in cultural creations to appear in their full significance. So he criticizes religion's (specially Christianity's) claim to be at a superior level and its attempt to control "autonomous cultural functions" such as science, the arts, ethics and politics. Seeing "level" to be suggestive of superiority of one level over another or reduction of one level to another on the one hand, and not suggestive of a mutuality between religion and the cultural functions on the other, Tillich proposes the metaphor "dimension", which he finds affirming the possibility of all dimensions meeting in the same point, that is length, breadth and depth meeting at the same point

⁹²Tillich, *UC*, p.36. See Tillich, *PE*, p.46: "Religion, if it acts heteronomously, has ceased to be the substance and life-blood of a culture and has itself become a section of it..."

⁹³See Tillich, *PE*, p.57.

⁹⁴Tillich, *PTTB*, p.40.

without interfering with each other.⁹⁵ He finds this essential for a theological understanding of humans, which calls for seeing a human being both in self-relatedness as well as in relation to her/his *ground*, which reveals the universal structure of being: "Man is one, he is self-integrating in all his dimensions, he disintegrates in all of them, and he must be reintegrated, i.e., healed in all of them, in order to be healed at all."⁹⁶

A positive, *preservative* and *facilitative* character, therefore, has been identified in the religious substance by Tillich. Only what is *in* a cultural dimension, and not any thing from outside, can preserve the autonomy of that dimension. Religion has this preserving character only when it is present in forms and not when it identifies itself with certain forms. When the latter happens, religion as form can impose its form on other concrete religions. The true character of the religious substance is lost.

It is possible to show that, if ... a special religious culture be imposed on dissenters or foreign cultures, it is not the ultimate, with its justified claim to grasp the hearts of men, but something provisional and conditioned which uses the religious ultimacy for *its* claims.... Theonomous thinking sides with autonomous criticism, if such forms of religious culture present themselves as absolutes.⁹⁷

"Theonomy does not stand against autonomy"; for it "is the answer to the question implied in autonomy".⁹⁸ And theonomy takes the side of autonomy to fight heteronomy, which "imposes an alien law, religious or secular, on man's mind" as witnessed in "the 'terror' exercised by absolute churches or absolute states."⁹⁹ Theonomy affirms autonomy because the latter is basically "obedience to reason", that

⁹⁵Tillich, *STIII*, pp.14-15.

⁹⁶Tillich, *PTMW* 6, p.410.

⁹⁷Tillich, *PE*, pp.57-8.

⁹⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.46.

⁹⁹Tillich, *PE*, p.46. It is this heteronomous attitude of institutional religion that Science had to counteract. (Tillich, *PTTB*, p.46) Such heteronomy from the side of the Church, then, leads to a public mistrust and rejection of religion.

is, the act of grasping the structure present in mind and reality. So autonomy "operates in the theoretical, as well as in the practical, spheres of culture" and must be allowed to do so, because each sphere of culture reflects the "structure of being". But theonomy criticizes autonomy at the point the latter separates itself from the religious substance and "replaces mystical nature with rational nature".¹⁰⁰ Hence autonomy should be constantly related to theonomy.

"Theonomy" has been defined as a culture in which the ultimate meaning of existence shines through all finite forms of thought and action; the culture is transparent, and its creations are vessels of a spiritual content.¹⁰¹

However, although theonomy or theonomous culture represents for Tillich the proper relationship between religion and culture, he does not see it as a final stage in the religious and cultural development of humankind, nor as an experience possible only within the Christian tradition. Rather, he sees *plural* manifestations of theonomy. With every cultural sphere seeking ultimate meaning, the old theonomy must give way to a new theonomy.¹⁰² Instead of subscribing to any progressivist idea which in history has arisen from the side of culture and from the side of religion (the Church), Tillich offers a principle by which a particular religion-culture correlation can be evaluated: "The more the form, the greater the autonomy; the more the substance or import, the greater the theonomy."¹⁰³

The affirmation of plural manifestations of theonomy shows Tillich's pluralist stance. How Tillich fares in relation to one important criterion emphasized in recent pluralist theology of religions will now be discussed.

A pluralism which simply affirms the validity of all religions and cultures without at the same time affirming *the possibility of developing criteria* for showing

¹⁰⁰Tillich, *PE*, p.44.

¹⁰¹Tillich, *PE*, p.xvii.

¹⁰²Tillich, *PE*, p.46.

¹⁰³Tillich, *PTTB*, p.42.

the mutual significance of religions is one which would have no credibility in a theology of religions discussion. Tillich's pluralism is obviously not a popular version of pluralism. In fact we have already pointed out in the course of our analyses of Tillich's definitions and correlations that one main criterion that Tillich puts forward and satisfies in practice is the fact of *one* religious substance (even "one" as a qualifier needs to be denied to affirm transcendence), *one* structure of being, *one logos* structure, expressing itself in *many* ways. Hence the idea of the 'one and the many' is a statement synonymous with Tillich's religion-culture correlation. The one fundamental substance is for Tillich the *basis* for seeing the connexions between the various forms and for understanding the change from one form into another (and the significance of those changes for the personal, social and cosmic realms). One essential feature of the religious substance is *ultimacy*: "The religious element in culture is the inexhaustible depth of a genuine creation. One may call it substance or the ground from which culture lives. It is the element of ultimacy which culture lacks in itself but to which it points."¹⁰⁴ One of the consequences of this criterion, which is the question of the acceptability of determination from *within* (substance determining form), will concern us here.

We have already seen Tillich calling the Church to recognize its "form" or "cultural" character and to refrain from claiming superiority over other cultural functions. Now, we must refer to Tillich's positive suggestion that Christianity relate itself to and see itself in the light of the various cultural creations. He points out that Liberal theology by accepting the role of the "Protestant principle" has taught us

to realize that Christianity cannot be considered in isolation from the general religious and cultural, psychological and sociological, development of humanity; that Christianity, as well as every Christian, is involved in the universal structures and changes of human life...¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴Tillich, *ST* III, p.101.

¹⁰⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.xxvii.

Every living religion, including Christianity, is in mutual engagement with the other cultural functions, and hence cultural changes are reflected in the cultural context as a whole, including the religious sphere. It is when the question whether Tillich is concerned about distinguishing the better from the worse in cultural forms is raised, for example by Page,¹⁰⁶ that there is an ambiguity in Tillich about attempting answers from within culture. On the one hand Tillich believes that the transcendent principle is necessary and in fact is the basis of seeing cultural oppositions between good and evil, an insight which Tillich attributes to Nietzsche.¹⁰⁷ This is consistent with the fact that a concrete cultural function has meaning only in relation to its ground. So it seems that only separate relations between each cultural act and the religious ground exist, there being no relations between the different cultural acts. Affirming the religious substance as ground and as "a unity" in this way is absurd to Clayton, because it amounts to the ground receiving a different "value" from each of the relations.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, from Tillich's understanding that a human being is a unity, and from his repeated statement that salvation or healing is something that happens to the whole person, the point can be drawn that one cultural act has immediate consequences for other acts. If such interaction is possible at the existential level, then

¹⁰⁶Ruth Page, "The Consistent Christology of Paul Tillich", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.36, p.209.

¹⁰⁷In Nietzsche's idea of the human person being 'beyond good and evil', Tillich finds the form of the individual-concerned 'ethics of virtue' violently shattered by the religious import to give rise to the new form of the 'ethics of grace'. And instead of suggesting any ideal substance-form relation, Tillich is content to go with Nietzsche's assertion that the person characterized by the 'beyond good and evil' existence is *better* than the person who practises the ethics of virtue. (Tillich, *PTTB*,47-8) Despite its implicit affirmation of the religious substance, Nietzsche's approach does lead to an opposition between the universal and concrete frames. This then is the source of denial of all cultural attempts and of meaning itself.

¹⁰⁸Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, pp.147-50. Clayton's concern about the proper 'value' of the religious substance is misplaced. A form cannot assign a value or content to its ground. We will see under "Religion in Quasi-Religions" that secular forms can be a matter of ultimate concern, and as such a dynamic relation with a yes and a no should be present between the religious ground and the secular object of one's ultimate concern. This means that any attempt to give a value to the religious ground in terms of a particular form will amount to demonization.

intellectual distinctions of "more true" and "less true" are possible. In fact Tillich speaks about the "mutual immanence of religion and culture" and the responsibility of both philosophies of religion and philosophies of culture to close the gap from both sides.¹⁰⁹

This immanence might not always be obvious in some of Tillich's considerations of the substance-form correlation. His idea of cultural forms being broken by the religious substance is a case in point. But this does not mean that for Tillich forms are dispensable, as his comment about expressionism shows: "a form-shattering religious import is struggling to find form".¹¹⁰ What Tillich is saying is that if present cultural forms are shattered, then a new form takes its place, the religion-culture correlation not being lost at any point.

The relation of import to form must be taken as resembling a line, one pole of which represents pure form and the other pole pure import. Along the line itself, however, the two are always in unity. The revelation of a predominant import consists in the fact that the form becomes more and more inadequate, that the reality, in its overflowing abundance, shatters the form meant to contain it; and yet this overflowing and shattering is itself still form.¹¹¹

Tillich does not say how this point of the intensity in the religious import is reached, nor the means by which higher or sophisticated forms are found by the religious substance for its actualization. The question of the import appearing in a more revealing way can be answered *either* by claiming that religious import by definition has the best and the only form in which it can appear *or* by saying that being-itself is grasped in terms of her/his concrete ultimate concern. The first possibility reflects a supranaturalist answer, and hence cannot be Tillich's. The other answer is certainly Tillich's, but it has an ambiguity. If being-itself is grasped in terms of one's concrete ultimate concern, is not being-itself more likely to appear in quite the same way as

¹⁰⁹Tillich, *PE*, p.56.

¹¹⁰Tillich, *PTTB*, p.46.

¹¹¹Tillich, *PTTB*, p.42.

expected through one's ultimate concern rather than in a radically new and revealing way? Tillich's important affirmation must be about the essential character of the "religious principle", "Unconditional", "import", "ultimate meaning", which is to "shak[e] the foundation of all things and [to] build them up new."¹¹² This statement does not simply mean that forms are neutral things available to the religious principle. Rather culture itself has a *telos* that directs it to the universal structure of being. There is, however, a circularity in this, because to say that the universal is present in the particular will imply that the particular has to point to the universal. Tillich does not seem to face or answer this difficulty. What is present in Tillich and can be used to lessen the force of the attack is his claim presented earlier, that the ultimate is never present in itself so that a particular form can *point back* at it. Rather every criticism of an earlier form is done in the power of the religious principle which is present in the new form.¹¹³ Tillich's insistence is on the inseparability of religion and culture.

Here we reach one of Tillich's clearest expressions of his pluralism. His idea of *many* valid religion-culture or substance-form correlations without any one of them being the criterion of the rest corresponds to a pluralist notion. The religious substance within each correlation is the criterion that judges the respective correlation and creates a new correlation. The pluralism we identify here is more general, although it can apply to the case of the diversity of religions as well. As cultural acts are performed in a specific situation and with a specific religio-cultural heritage, the various correlations within that context or tradition will be more intelligible, comparable and mutually influencing than correlations outwith it. Normative criteria specific to each concrete religion will not easily allow comparison of correlations

¹¹²Tillich, *PTTB*, p.41. Tillich's use of "religious principle", "Unconditional", "import" and "ultimate meaning" for being-itself in his 1919 Kant Society presentation indicates that, for Tillich, one encounters being-itself through the cultural disciplines, which affirms the fact of being-itself expressing itself in manifold ways.

¹¹³See Tillich, *ST III*, p.53: "Every new form is made possible only by breaking through the limits of an old form."

between traditions. Tillich's theology of culture would need to undergo further development in the light of insights coming through interreligious dialogue.

Lastly, we discuss some final problems which must be dealt with in the interests of Tillich's pluralist stance and of the inner consistency of his religion-culture correlation theory. The idea of religion as the meaning-giving aspect of culture would without doubt appear to be a religious imperialism to those who seek to interpret culture from within culture. Hence they would claim autonomy for the subject matter of each of the cultural disciplines and an inter-disciplinary approach which respects the method of each discipline. Although Tillich does not share the relativism inherent in this claim, he affirms the autonomy of the cultural disciplines from his own perspective:

*Every universal concept in cultural science is either useless or a normative concept in disguise; it is either an alleged description of something that does not exist or an expression of a standpoint; it is a worthless shell or it is a creative act.*¹¹⁴

But there is a difference between the relativist proposal of an inter-disciplinary model and Tillich's "theology of culture" model. Relativism on the one hand recognizes no common principle or structure underlying the various disciplines and on the other suggests only a custom-built, tentative model that is determined by the subject-matter of each of the participating disciplines. Opposed to this is Tillich's model which assumes that the religious substance has the structure that comprehends and informs all the cultural spheres. He speaks of the "universal significance of the theologian of culture" with regard to the theologian's role in articulating the *basis* of the cultural disciplines.

Far removed from every restriction to a special sphere, he can give expression from the standpoint of substance to the all-embracing unity of the cultural functions and demonstrate the relations that lead from one phenomenon of

¹¹⁴Tillich, *PTTB*, p.36 (italics in original).

culture to another, through the substantial unity of the substance finding expression in them; he can thereby help, from the viewpoint of substance, to bring about the unity of culture in the same way that the philosopher helps from the viewpoint of pure forms and categories.¹¹⁵

The affirmation here of a "substantial unity" (and the consequent task of showing the cultural sciences their respective aims) and the previous quotation safeguard the universality of religious substance from being replaced by any concept of one of the sciences, including theology as a cultural science. The approach of a theologian therefore must be one of a sensitive analysis of the various cultural forms on the one hand, and a reflection on the religious substance on the other hand, with both leading to an identification of the universal concepts.¹¹⁶ It is Tillich's going for such a *formal* answer that often irritates his critics,¹¹⁷ who at this point are expecting Tillich to give a proper account of the nature of religious substance. But Tillich cannot do that, for that would mean creating a new form for the religious substance, which form would then become authoritative for all other forms. This is a heteronomy he must resist. So he can give only a *formal* answer, that the *logos* which is present in mind and reality represents the structure of religious substance. With the receiving of the unconditional in every form such as truth, goodness and beauty, one is acquainted with the *logos*-element in each of the forms (thereby appreciating the validity and the mutual significance of the forms), although it is the task only of theology or of 'theonomous science' to deal with the "ultimate meaning" and "existential significance" of the "logical forms" and "factual material of things".¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Tillich, *PTTB*, p.45.

¹¹⁶See Tillich, *PTTB*, pp.42-43.

¹¹⁷Thompson suggests that a formalistic statement is not a proper criterion of truth because it does not help in distinguishing the true from the false (Ian Thompson, *Being and Meaning: Paul Tillich's Theory of Meaning, Truth and Logic*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981, p.121).

¹¹⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.45.

However, although in theory theology should not surpass its original limitations as a cultural science, in practice it can parade itself solely as a "higher" science in one of two ways: either theology turning the concepts of its concrete religious standpoint into universal concepts - thereby losing the truly universal, or theology imposing universal concepts on the concrete religious standpoint - thereby destroying living, actual religion. Thus in principle, Tillich's theological method implied in his theology of culture cannot be suggested to be more expressive of religion and less of culture, especially with Tillich's statements about concrete cultural standpoints influencing, or bringing out hidden aspects of, universal concepts. An example of the utter *mutuality of both sides of the correlation* of religion and culture might be given from a late article (1960) of Tillich's entitled "The Impact of Psychotherapy on Theological Thought". After pointing out how concrete psychological factors of experience in some Christian thinkers have influenced their respective ideas of God, Tillich states: "no statement about God can be made which is not rooted in the correlation between man's self-awareness and the experience of the divine presence. Every change on one side of this correlation changes the whole correlation."¹¹⁹

From this analysis of a particular correlation (religion-culture), which is one among other correlations of Tillich's overall theological method, it is possible to affirm his pluralism. This means, however, that Tillich's theological method can be said to be pluralist only after examining the other correlations, which will be done in Chapter V, in addition to analyzing his religious typology and some important theological concepts.

A question regarding the universality of the religion-culture correlation arises at this point. In the above discussion on the distinctive character of theological

¹¹⁹Tillich, *PTMW* 2, p.311.

method, we have seen Tillich speaking about theology, not simply Christian theology. This means that on the one hand he has claimed the religion-culture correlation to be the most adequate way of interpreting the entire philosophical, theological and historical traditions of the West, which is what he studies and addresses directly. And on the other hand, despite his acknowledgment of his Christian presuppositions in other contexts, he has proposed that theology in other than the Western situation can be analyzed in terms of the religion-culture correlation. He seems to think that because the religion-culture correlation is drawn from the most *basic character of human existence and creative acts*, it should hold good for every human context.

Wherever human existence in thought or action becomes a subject of doubts and questions, wherever unconditioned meaning becomes visible in works which only have conditioned meaning in themselves, there culture is religious.¹²⁰

Given Tillich's presuppositions that human existence attains its essential state by receiving its meaning from *above* or from its *ground* (which is the same thing) and that one's *creative acts* in some fragmentary way fulfil the personal, social and cosmic realities, his claims about the absoluteness of ultimate concern and of the religion-culture correlation make sense. Tillich indicates Plato as the source of his presuppositions, for Plato had drawn into his system aspects of the religious period following the Homeric period of reform (hence inspired by both religion and culture) and produced a philosophy which has since become *classical* for the Western world.¹²¹ This heritage, along with Plato's theory of *Ideas*, which suggests both the absoluteness and universality of *Ideas*, make the religion-culture correlation *relevant* for the West. (By stressing the word relevant, we are admitting only that Plato's thought is one important stream for the development of Western religious and cultural traditions.) So if his basic assumption that *the human being is a unity interactively performing plural and different cultural acts*, which is the basis of his religion-culture

¹²⁰Tillich, *IH*, p.49.

¹²¹See Tillich, *UC*, p.35.

correlation, is not shared by another culture, then the religion-culture model cannot immediately serve as a means of evaluating the religious data of that culture without first appreciating its philosophical and anthropological presuppositions.¹²² But here we must point out a distinction between the religion-culture *structure* and various religion-culture *models* to comprehend this structure. Tillich would say that the former is common to all cultures, and that even philosophical and anthropological presuppositions emerge from the religion-culture structure reflected in existence (self-world structure) and thought (subject-object structure). So Tillich's pluralism would require on the one hand an absolutist affirmation of the structure of reality and on the other a relativist evaluation of the different religion-culture models. This approach of Tillich will be examined more carefully while spelling out his criticisms against absolutist, relativist and universalist theologies of religions in Chapter III.

For the present it might be useful to cite an example from the Indian religious-philosophical tradition to show that Tillich's insistence on the possibility of a *universal* structure and the importance of *formal* definitions and criteria for analyzing that structure does have a parallel outside the West. One of the most important philosophical concepts, *dharma*, has a metaphysical as well as an ethical meaning. In its metaphysical sense, it refers to the essential nature or structure of reality as a whole. In its ethical sense, it refers to the essential character of one's actions in relation to society. At the ethical level, distortions are abundant, "duty" being assigned to people hereditarily. There is a clear connection made between the metaphysical structure and the ethical, the former being the basis of the latter.¹²³

¹²²We will see in the next chapter that Tillich finds that different cultures and societies have ultimate concerns with different contents and also emphasize different poles of the respective dialectic. These, along with other theological concepts and methodological principles of Tillich, have to be examined for a more adequate evaluation of his pluralism, which will be done in the remaining chapters.

¹²³See Devaraja, N. K., *The Mind and Spirit of India*, Varanasi/Delhi/Patna: Motilal Banarsidas, 1967, pp.157-9,166-8. However, we must be open to the possibility of original

In conclusion, we have seen that the religion-culture correlation satisfies the basic conditions of pluralism by showing the universality of religion and by affirming both sides of the correlation. A summary with regard to the relevance of the religion-culture correlation for Tillich's concept of religion, which is the concern of this chapter, is that the correlation provides helpful ways of affirming Tillich's understanding of religion and of seeing the significance of his concept of religion for the whole sphere of human existence, including culture. Tillich's basis for considering ideologies and cultural movements within his concept of religion has been appreciated in our discussion of the religion-culture correlation. So, although technically no significant argument is required to show how quasi-religions are covered by Tillich's concept of religion, we shall briefly discuss some special features of the quasi-religions, because for Tillich they are of the utmost importance in the encounters of groups professing different ultimate concerns.

3. Religion in Quasi-religions

The theoretical basis of religion's presence in quasi-religions has already been established in terms of the larger definition of religion and the religion-culture correlation. The emphasis here, however, shifts from religion being the ground or substance of each of the cultural dimensions to cultural forms which claim to be alternative worldviews to the religions proper. Are secular movements based on cultural ideals regarded as alternative worldviews because they share a *common basis* with the religions proper? Or are the two complexes totally different? Our task will be to appreciate how Tillich's concept of religion takes account of the religious element in quasi-religions, and to ascertain any special implications the concept may have for Tillich's generally pluralist approach.

sources of Indian traditions showing other relationships between religion and culture.



Quasi-religions are so called because of the *religious character that they clearly reveal*, namely the "unconditional character of an ultimate concern".¹²⁴ The *religious structure* is satisfied in that there is the one who is ultimately concerned (subjective) and the content of his concern such as freedom, society, nation, etc.(objective). But the question here is, whether the *power of being* which is both the *basis of* and *beyond* the subjective and the objective is present in a quasi-religion. In contrast to Küng, who answers negatively and hence calls systems based on secular concerns "pseudo-religions" rather than quasi-religions (suggesting that pseudo-religions are "surrogates for religion"),¹²⁵ Tillich sees quasi-religions as having a religious character potentially, although not actually. Thus he rejects "pseudo", which "indicates intended but deceptive similarity", and prefers "quasi", which "indicates a genuine similarity, not intended, but based on points of identity".¹²⁶ Although these are secular movements and hence "profoundly different" from the religions proper, they show "decisive characteristics of the religions proper". And hence for Tillich they are to be included in the concept of religion.¹²⁷

It is the "analogy of religion" in movements in the West such as humanism, liberalism, democracy, socialism, and even anti-humanist Fascism and pseudo-humanist Communism that make them alternative worldviews to the religions proper. And it is only in terms of the common basis of the religious principle that the success of these secular movements can be explained.¹²⁸ Tillich's support for this can be found in his tracing the *origin* of these Western movements in Christianity. They are

¹²⁴Tillich, *DF*, 2.

¹²⁵Hans Küng, "A Christian Response" in Hans Küng (ed.), *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism*, London: Collins, 1987, p.170.

¹²⁶Tillich, *CEWR*, p.5.

¹²⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.3-4. Quasi-religion indicates the fact that "ultimate concern can express itself in secular terms" (*ibid.*, p.94)

¹²⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.9.

inspired by the common *aim* of a radical transformation of society symbolized in the 'Kingdom of God'.¹²⁹ It is when Christianity ceased to fulfil what was within it that other movements needed to arise to fulfil it. In making this claim Tillich is not blind to the fact of new developments themselves such as the idea of the individual, scientific inventions and new explanations for life and the physical world having arisen independent of Christianity's own practices and initiatives. For Tillich acknowledges the possibility of new cultural forms and sees cultural changes taking place "by the inner dynamics of culture itself".¹³⁰ What Tillich actually sees as Christian and hence of religious substance in the secular movements is the truth of *fuller realization* and *fuller understanding* of all beings represented by the *ought-to-be element in the holy*. So the success of the secular movements derive their strength from what is religious in their claims such as human dignity and science. It is the Church's refusal to recognize the religious element in the new movements and the Church's attack of the movements that the cleavage between the sacred and the secular came about in modern times. Hence liberal humanism had to fight against "the absolutisms of the past".¹³¹ Various other movements such as the Renaissance, Enlightenment and naturalism arose to emphasize autonomy from the respective defensive and oppressive Church which functioned after the manner of the "church of the Inquisition".¹³² Tillich's analysis therefore finds a *continuation* of the religious spirit in the secular movements in essence, though in historical expressions the church and secular movements remained opposed, because of a sort of power struggle between them. So Tillich stated that "a merely matter-of-fact culture is dishonesty or illusion"¹³³ and

¹²⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.72.

¹³⁰Tillich, *TC*, p.50.

¹³¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.9.

¹³²Tillich, *UC*, p.33.

¹³³Tillich, *PE*, p.61.

that "atheism is an impossibility and an illusion", because the state of grace operates in it in a "transparent form" - though not in a "tangible" form.¹³⁴

If the claim that secular movements have a religious basis is to be verified, one way in which this can be done is to show that these movements will fail when they lose the religious element. Tillich's understanding of religion as the *affirmation* and *transformation* of life, which involves criticism of present forms, makes this possible. According to him Christianity had inherited the element of the "ought to be" from the Jewish prophets.¹³⁵ This prophetic, critical spirit is the religious element that is seen by Tillich to be present in the cultural movements, without which scientific autonomy and freedom will lose themselves.¹³⁶ Similarly, he refers to the case of humanism, which "has no historical reality as such because it has no overarching symbol which could produce unconditional concern".¹³⁷ In humanism's history, starting from the time a correlation was made between the goddess Athene and the humanist Pericles in ancient Greece upto its flourishing on Christian soil in modern times, humanism could survive only as long as it was related to the religious substance. Tillich finds humanism undercutting its own roots in modern times "as for example, in a scientism which deprives all nonscientific creative functions, such as the arts and religion, of their autonomy".¹³⁸ With reference to future developments, Tillich pointed out that humanism would have no chance of resisting Communism and Fascism because "a self-defying radicalization would take place and the loss of that very liberal humanism which is to be defended would be almost unavoidable". History, however, has proved Tillich partly wrong here, especially in the collapse of Communism in the West. But it might be suggested that Tillich's criticism of Communism for its "a-personal

¹³⁴Tillich, *PE*, pp.214, 213.

¹³⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.68.

¹³⁶Tillich, *ERQR*,p.55.

¹³⁷Tillich, *ERQR*, p.35.

¹³⁸Tillich, *CEWR*, p.10.

subjection under the demands of a neocollectivistic system"¹³⁹ points to a possible critical force responsible for the overthrowing of Communism from within.

It appears that Tillich is not adequately recognizing the genuine developments of critical functions of the human spirit in various spheres by claiming that they derive from a religious source. But this charge is unfounded because his various statements in relation to the cultural movements bear two related strains in his thinking in this respect, the ontological and the historical. Through the ontological approach he affirms that humans have the potential for creative and critical functions, whose actual expressions depend on individual, social and historical factors. When talking from a historical perspective Tillich makes connections between preceding and/or succeeding periods of history to show how the creative or critical functions express themselves in relation to the demands of the respective situations. There is no contradiction between Tillich's ontological and historical analyses.

A further analogy of religion in the quasi-religions is significant in view of both the religions proper and quasi-religions being open to the two same dangers, namely demonization and profanization. The former happens when that which is finite or of a matter of preliminary concern is elevated to the ultimate or to ultimacy, after the manner of the church's "defensive heteronomous forms" to resist the various renaissances of the middle and later Middle Ages. A modern example is that of a 'nation' being attributed qualities "which far surpass the reality and being and functioning of the nation" and considered almost divine.¹⁴⁰ Through an absolute symbol such as "a new meaning of life", sacrifices are demanded by Fascism and Nazism: the sacrifice of "freedom for security, autonomy for certainty, individuality for community, and personality for an absolute symbol".¹⁴¹ Similarly, totalitarianisms

¹³⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.8.

¹⁴⁰Tillich, *DF*, p.44.

¹⁴¹Tillich, *PE*, p.247.

develop doctrines and symbols to express an ultimate state of being in the world. "But this ultimate is not truly ultimate because it does not transcend relative interests and concerns. It tries to invest a particular loyalty with unconditional validity."¹⁴² Tillich's religion-culture correlation is also able to show the reason for the fall of the systems. The concern of nation being only a preliminary concern and not an ultimate concern, it cannot *unite* humankind (which involves *reunion* with the ground of being) but *disrupts* it.¹⁴³ A form of practical Christianity where religion and ethics influenced each other mutually, on the contrary, had the power to resist nationalistic paganism.¹⁴⁴

Profanization happens when the secular forms become empty when deprived of their religious substance as was the case with the ancient world's Skepticism.¹⁴⁵ Modern expressions are the "idea of progress", influential in the West since the Renaissance, and utopian ideas of a stage of reason in bourgeoisie thinking, of a stage of classless society in working-class movements and of a stage in the evolutionary process.¹⁴⁶

It is important to conclude this section by pointing out that Tillich regards the *revelatory situation* to be common to both religions proper and to quasi-religions, for 'revelation' is an important criterion for a pluralist theology of religions, as we shall see in Chapter IV. So if quasi-religions also satisfy the 'revelation' criterion, then they make the scope of interreligious dialogue broader and suggest Tillich's pluralism to be more radical (that is, a pluralism that affirms more religious frameworks which share a common basis). Tillich points out that quasi-religions have even myth and cult to

¹⁴²Tillich, *PTMW* 2, p.192.

¹⁴³Tillich, *PTMW* 2, p.169.

¹⁴⁴Tillich, *PTMW* 2, p.194.

¹⁴⁵Tillich, *UC*, pp.33-34. Profanization is the case of the religious substance being lost to rational form, and thereby becoming empty. (*ibid.*, p.35)

¹⁴⁶Tillich, *FR*, pp.67-69. Utopia, from 'outopos', can never be completely secular for it expects a reality which 'has no place in history'. (Tillich *FR*, p.68)

preserve and express the respective revelatory situations. After stating that myth and cult "are present in every religion and quasi-religion, even in the most secularized forms", he argues:

An existential protest against myth and cult is possible only in the power of myth and cult. All attacks against them have a religious background, which they try to conceal, but without success. We know today what a secular myth is. We know what a secular cult is. The totalitarian movements have provided us with both. Their great strength was that they transformed ordinary concepts, events, and persons into myths, and ordinary performances into rituals; therefore they had to be fought with other myths and rituals - religious and secular. You cannot escape them, however you demythologize or deritualize. They always return and you must always judge them again and again.¹⁴⁷

The ongoing task of a concrete religion therefore is that of judging itself as well as judging quasi-religions because both are on the one hand based on the religious ground and on the other hand prone to demonization and profanization.

The relation of Protestantism to the secular realm is the most positive, due to the Protestant principle that the sacred sphere is not nearer to the Ultimate than the secular sphere. It denies that either of them has a greater claim to grace than the other; both are infinitely distant from and infinitely near to the Divine.¹⁴⁸

We have seen here that Tillich's larger concept of religion, namely, "ultimate concern can express itself in secular terms".¹⁴⁹ This means that quasi-religions, which are based on the secular, should be included in the concept of religion because they show the "decisive characteristics of the religions proper".¹⁵⁰ The religion-culture correlation came in use in the identifying of the religious element in the cultural movements. Quasi-religions were seen as more susceptible to demonization and profanization than the religions proper. The criticism to which both the historical religions and quasi-religions should subject themselves was finally pointed out. The *common basis* of the two as brought out by Tillich's approach is very useful for

¹⁴⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, p.93.

¹⁴⁸Tillich, *CEWR*, p.47.

¹⁴⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.94.

¹⁵⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.3-4.

understanding the nature of the interactions between religions and quasi-religions in the present situation.

CHAPTER II

A TYPOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

That religion as ultimate concern cannot be understood in itself and that it is only expressed in cultural forms has been appreciated. A historical religion is constituted by a number of such cultural forms bearing the holy and forming a separate sphere within the larger sphere of the culture of the particular community. It is Tillich's claim that a religious typology which pays attention to the history of religions is necessary to comprehend the relation between ultimate concern and how it is experienced and represented in the religions. Why Tillich uses typology and what religious object he focuses on to develop his religious typology are questions that will be discussed first. Then we shall present the different types that he identifies and the connections between them. And finally we shall evaluate the typology in the light of two main concerns: one, identifying the common basis of the concrete religions if any, and two, identifying the way(s) in which the special features of concrete religions are affirmed as valid.

1. The Basis of a Religious Typology

The importance of his "dynamic typology of the religions" for his analysis of the relationship between Christianity and the religions proper and the quasi-religions is stated by Tillich in the preface to his volume *CEWR*. In fact he lists four other considerations with it,¹ not particularly in any order of priority; and we might suggest that the rest are comprehended in his "typology", even "the elaboration of the universalist element in Christianity" is implied by the last type of the typology, "Religion of the Concrete Spirit".

¹Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.vii-viii. The other four are: "the characterization of the quasi-religions"; "the elaboration of the universalist element in Christianity"; "the dialogical character of the encounter of high religions"; and "the judgment of Christianity against itself as a religion".

A religious typology is Tillich's answer to the question of the theological significance of the concrete religions. It is a result of correlating the central features of religion as ultimate concern and the important elements of concrete religions. The former is indispensable for theology, for without it "no assertion is a theological one"² and the latter is equally important, in two ways: first, because it is only in a concrete situation, whether religious or quasi-religious, that ultimate concern is present, and second, because a theological method that interprets ultimate concern satisfies the conditions of methodological adequacy only if it can carry out its task in relation to the various expressions of ultimate concern. So Tillich testifies that the history of religions had an essential part to play in the development of his theology:

I have tried to look at Protestantism from the outside as well as the inside. From the outside: first from the point of view of a passionately loved and studied philosophy, and, in later years, from the point of view of a powerfully developing history of religion; and, finally, from the point of view of the experienced and interpreted general history of our period.³

How does Tillich correlate his theological concept of ultimate concern and the history-of-religions accounts of the different religious elements? He attempts to engage with both sides in terms of the concept of the holy. So the types are built on the "holy" and its manifestations. The "foundations" of historical religions are "revelatory experiences".⁴ Although the history of religions is certainly not only about the holy, there is no other concept that is central to theology for him. The history of the idea of God "is the basic element in the history of religion".⁵ Tillich seems to suggest that from a theological perspective the history of religions can be comprehended by studying the concrete revelatory situations: "the tension between

²Tillich, *PE*, p.87.

³Tillich, *PE*, p.11.

⁴Tillich, *ST* III, p.358. Keith Ward would agree here, for in his recent book he claims that "Comparative theology is an enquiry into ideas of God and revelation, of ultimate reality and its disclosures to human minds, as such ideas arise across the full spectrum of human history and experience." (Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, p.50)

⁵Tillich, *ST* I, p.218.

medium and that which is mediated" as "the dynamo which moves the history of religion".⁶ This would mean that other aspects of religion should be interpreted primarily in the light of the revelatory situation. The question is, whether such an attempt to *integrate* and *interpret* the numerous myths, rituals and institutions of the history of religions amounts to an insensitivity to the complex and unique character of the religious reality tied up with the cultural situation of the respective historical periods. This concern will call for some criticism of Tillich, which will be done later (under 'The Correlation of the Systematic and the Historical'), but Tillich immunizes himself against it in a certain way by seeing religion in its fundamental character as not belonging to a sphere separate from other spheres but as influencing the individual from within and without. "Revelatory experiences are imbedded in general experience. They are distinguished from it but not separated from it."⁷

But there arises the question whether the concrete character of religion will be properly captured in a typology which is most likely to develop types that have some logical basis. Tillich regards such a basis as necessary for any understanding: "Types are logical ideals for the sake of a discerning understanding; they do not exist in time and space, and in reality we find only a mixture of types in every particular example."⁸ But even this logical basis would make better sense in some religio-philosophical frameworks than in others. It could thereby express one religion in a better light than others. Tillich cannot ignore this danger, for his own proposal (which we saw under "Religion and Culture") of theology's starting point is one's *concrete religious standpoint*. It is from this standpoint that one explores universal structures. Thus while proposing a typology in relation to interpretations of history, where the types are actually mutually exclusive, he states: "A merely objective typology is impossible

⁶Tillich, *ERQR*, p.68.

⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.157.

⁸Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.54-55.

in the realm of the spiritual life. Understanding spiritual things means participating in them, deciding about them, and transforming them."⁹ Therefore, in principle Tillich would see a concrete-universal tension, which implies the impossibility of any rigidity of the typology.

Using his substance-form correlation in relation to the phenomenon of religion, Tillich constructs a typology which he thinks is capable of comprehending the various manifestations of the religious substance. He sees types as "ideal structures" which are present in special events, although not in their pure forms. So the religious reality in history is understood by seeing structures and events in their mutual interdependence.

Historical understanding oscillates between the intuition of the special and the analysis of the typical. The special cannot be described without reference to the type. The type is unreal without the special event in which it appears. Typology cannot replace historiography; historiography cannot describe anything without typology.¹⁰

However, for Tillich the historical instances of the types are not so significant from a theological point of view, because "the forces" or the "type-determining elements" which brought about the historical religions and which "belong to the nature of the holy and with it to the nature of man, and with it to the nature of the universe and the revelatory self-manifestation of the divine" are more important. For Tillich these elements explain how religions arise and die.¹¹ A one-sided emphasis on one of the elements in a type or a claiming ultimacy for a bearer of the ultimate can lead to the irrelevance or death of one religion and the emergence of another.

⁹Tillich, *PE*, p.16. See *ibid.*, pp.16-27, esp. p.17.

¹⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.219. Cf. Joachim Wach, who commends typology for its function as a "bridge between empirical and normative inquiry" in the "characterization of religions as wholes"? (Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, ed. with an Introduction by Joseph M. Kitagawa, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958, pp.25-26)

¹¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.57.

Another doubt that is usually raised about typological thinking which Tillich recognizes is that types are thought to stand *beside* each other rigidly with no interrelationship. This, he points out, is due to the spatial character that is often attached to 'types', and he states that "types are not necessarily static", for the tension within every type drives the type beyond itself.

The kind of dialectics which, I believe, is most adequate to typological inquiries is the description of contrasting poles within one structure. A polar relation is a relation of interdependent elements, each of which is necessary for the other one and for the whole, although it is in tension with the opposite element. The tension drives both to conflicts and beyond the conflicts to possible unions of the polar elements. Described in this way, types lose their static rigidity, and the individual things and persons can transcend the type to which they belong without losing their definite character.¹²

Given Tillich's basic substance-form correlation and the various polar correlations under it (participation and individualization, the cognitive and technical functions, *theoria* and *praxis*, etc.), his portrayal of the manifestation of the holy can only assume a corresponding two-fold form:

The holy in relationship to us, wherever we meet it, has always two elements in its manifestation. It gives and it demands. The holiness of what is, in which we participate, and the holiness of what ought to be, in which we participate. These two elements are in some way present in every religion.¹³

Tillich also points out that these two elements determine the character of experiences and expressions of faith within a historical religion and between historical religions.

The dynamics of faith within and between the religions are largely determined by these two types, their interdependence and their conflicts. Their influence reaches into the most intimate cells of personal faith as well as into the movement of the great historical religions.¹⁴

¹²Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.55-56.

¹³Tillich, *ERQR*, p.21.

¹⁴Tillich, *DF*, pp.56-57; Tillich, *CEWR*, p.57. Macquarrie also sees the possibility of an intra-religious typology corresponding to a typology of religions, as religions are not homogeneous but contain many variations. (John Macquarrie, "The Meeting of Religions in the Modern World" in his *Theology, Church and Ministry*, London: SCM, 1986, p.132).

The two elements of faith are inseparable and are "omnipresent in every act of faith", but "one of them is always predominant",¹⁵ which is the source of conflict and of new acts of faith. Such a process being evident in concrete religions, we can see Tillich as an heir of Herder and Hegel, who according to Wach had begun to use typology for "the characterization of religions as wholes".¹⁶ We shall now see what important religious elements Tillich draws out from his concrete religious and theological standpoint to "erect signposts pointing to *types* of religions, their general characteristics, and their positions in relation to each other".¹⁷

2. Sacramental Religion

In its most fundamental and pervasive state, religion, for Tillich, is the immediate experience of the holy in something that bears the holy. A sacred universe is presupposed at this level of religious experience, thus making it possible for anything in the universe to become the bearer of the holy. The bearer might be said to have sacramental power, or the power to reveal the holy through a particular object (water, light), place (temple), act, person or book.¹⁸ And as this revelatory process is evident in all religions it might be called "the sacramental basis of religions", or simply "sacramental religion".¹⁹ Although sacramental religion in principle underlies all religions, as we shall see shortly, Tillich sometimes speaks of it as a separate type, the first type,²⁰ which then divides into two main types.

¹⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.57.

¹⁶Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religion*, p.26.

¹⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, p.54.

¹⁸Tillich does not subscribe to Schelling's Romanticist approach which "speaks of plants having a god" because there is no evidence of plants having an awareness of their ultimate ground. See Tillich, *UC*, p.13.

¹⁹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.22.

²⁰Tillich, *ERQR*, p.25.

"Sacramental" has reference to "sacrament", and the reason for Tillich thus naming his first type can be found in *ST* III, where he suggests that sacrament refers to the most fundamental expressions of religion, as "objective sign" (the visual symbol) and "subjective sign" (the word), the former being older than the latter because "the word is implicit in the completely silent sacramental material".²¹ The stress on the objective evident here suggests the importance Tillich gives to "thing" symbols (and also "word" and "concept" symbols) of different cultures and their abilities in their own right to express the divine to the respective communities. He argues that no special claim can be made for any sacrament or set of sacraments. After pointing out that "sacramental" embraces more than the seven, five or two sacraments prescribed by the churches, he states:

The largest sense of the term denotes everything in which the Spiritual Presence has been experienced; in a narrower sense, it denotes particular objects and acts in which a Spiritual community experiences the Spiritual Presence.²²

Sacramental religion is maintained by cult, ritual and myth, which are stronger in this form of religion than in others.²³ The sacramental object, event or person, which is the content of the ultimate concern of a religious group, receives this content from the "visionary experiences of individuals". This content is then "accepted by the collective reaction of groups, surrendered from generation to generation, changed, reduced, increased". So the correlation between the specific object and the one who has taken the object as the content of her/his ultimate concern is important in sacramental religion.²⁴ Tillich's theological definition and characterization of sacramental religion shows evidence of his attempt to include *primal religion* in this type.

²¹Tillich, *ST* III, p.128. Word and Sacrament are the two modes in which Spiritual Presence is received. When words communicate Spiritual Presence they become Word of God, and when objects become vehicles of the divine Spirit they become sacraments. (*ibid.*)

²²Tillich, *ST* III, pp.128-129.

²³See Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.89-92. Tillich points out that 'higher' religions arose by showing the finite character of symbols in relation to divine transcendence. (*ibid.*,91)

²⁴Tillich, *DF*, pp.58-59. This correlation removes the danger of conferring sacredness to

This will also be obvious from a few of his remarks about sacramental religion. Thus he suggests that in the sacramental stage, a *natural literalism* in relation to myths is inevitable because the primitive mind does not "separate the creations of symbolic imagination from the facts which can be verified through observation and experiment". Tillich grants validity to this religious mode until such time as the questioning spirit arises in them.²⁵ Literalism, which cannot distinguish the ultimate from the symbol of the ultimate, is seen by Tillich to be a mark of "primitivism" as against the "higher" religions.²⁶ Another fact that shows the closeness of sacramental and primal religions can be seen from a psychological fact that distinguishes the primitive period from the classical and modern periods. The primitive period is characterized more by unconscious stimuli and reactions, and the latter periods by rational decisions. However, Tillich refers to the discovery of the unconscious in recent psychology and says that it has reinforced the theological fact of the Spiritual Presence as "using" the visual sacrament, which impacts on the human unconscious, in addition to the Spirit communicating through the word.²⁷ So, according to Tillich, the sacramental's special connection with the unconscious gives it an important place, rational approaches stimulated by the conscious in modern or post-modern societies.

Another important analysis of Tillich that shows the closeness of the sacramental and the primal is his treatment of the concepts of time and space, which represent the "most fundamental tension of existence".²⁸ He shows how space being more characteristic of sacramental religion determines the understanding of the divine in this form of religion. The fact that each human group in primitive periods was profoundly influenced by a special space, to which a unique deity was associated,

some finite objects, as against others, in their own right.

²⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.52.

²⁶See Tillich, *ERQR*, p.64.

²⁷Tillich, *ST III*, p.130

²⁸Tillich, *TC*,30. See also *ibid.*, pp.30-35.

polytheism was in its original development not belief in 'many' gods but an affirmation of the fact of gods being *beside* each other in the manner of spaces being beside each other. Each special space by virtue of its connection with the existence of the respective group demanded ultimate commitment and worship from the group. It is the identification of the special deity with the respective space that makes defence of one's space defence of one's deity. Tillich sees such elevation and the consequent imperialism of a spatial god in the nationalisms of the twentieth century. In contrast to the imperialism that polytheism cannot avoid because of "beside-each-otherness" necessarily leading to "against-each-otherness", we shall show later (under "The Ground of Religion: God") that pluralism is possible only in terms of God understood as both universal and concrete.

Tillich's sacramental characterization of primal religion differs from other significant accounts of primal religion. He does not distinguish between pre-axial and post-axial religions as Hick, who follows Jaspers. Hick sees the liberation idea arising in the axial age, "a uniquely significant band of time" when "all the major religious options, constituting the major possible ways of conceiving the ultimate, were identified and established". This idea of salvation together with the concepts of the ultimate became the basis for distinguishing post-axial religion from the pre-axial religion.²⁹ There is no idea of a saviour god, only that of a high God who is creator and preserver in primal religion. Hick also observes how human existence in relation to such a God helped the tribes endure hardship, share joy communally and value earthly life highly. Keith Ward observes that the orientations of the primal societies were cosmic and communal. Hence they lacked a "clear distinction between morality and ritual or sacred law",³⁰ nor did they possess a definite sense of individuality.³¹

²⁹John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, pp.22-33.

³⁰K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, p.85.

³¹K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, p.63.

Though Hick and Ward are right in their depiction of the character of primal religion, they do not identify any factor from within primal religion that demands a move beyond their existing form. It is likely that they would want to see a number of historical, social and psychological factors together being the cause of new forms of religion, in contrast to Tillich who would want to see a basic dynamic within religion as the driving force towards attaining a higher religious level.

Although Tillich, like the others, affirms the importance of the cosmic order in sacramental religion (because reality is pervaded by the divine), he at the same time suggests the potentiality of sacramental religion to transcend itself on account of the divine's two-fold nature of "giving" and "demanding". Tillich acknowledges the stronger impulse in sacramental religion to live as an *integral part* of the cosmic and social orders, but at the same time he believes that the "*ought*" aspect is present in the spiritual life of humans, which, unlike the realm of nature which is filled with exemplars of a species, "creates unique embodiments of something universal".³² The polarity model that Tillich uses to analyze the dynamics of sacramental religion is taken from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as we have seen. So it has a historical basis and is not just an ideal model developed by Tillich. As Tillich's idea of the two-fold self-manifestation of the divine, with one of the elements being potential, is a *principle* that is followed in every realization and not the description of an actual transition from the sacramental to the higher stages, it cannot be rejected outright; it has to be and can be tested and modified.

The fact that the "sacramental" by definition expresses the revelatory situation has already been highlighted. Now it is important to show how revelation is the basic characteristic of sacramental religion, which at the same time makes sacramental religion the fundamental type of religion, a type which needs to be transcended but

³²Tillich, *STI*, p.107.

with its basic character preserved. The holy that manifests itself in the sacrament can only reveal itself in its two-fold nature, the holy which is present and gives and the holy which demands. But in all sacramental religion the holy as given prevails, without any complete break with the holy as ought-to-be. This is why one sees the special deity totally identified with one's special place, thereby needing protection rather than manifesting its power to transform. It is when the ought-to-be element begins to express itself more strongly that "the transition of the sacramental to ethical holiness" happens. Tillich describes the ought-to-be element as "special inner personal attitudes" and "attitudes towards others" which must follow when the holy is encountered.³³

The greater the sacramental power in a symbol, the greater is its proneness to "demonization", which is the elevation of the holy object from its state of being the bearer of the holy to that of the ultimate itself.³⁴ Tillich shows the tendency in sacramental religion to become "magic", "in the sense of the identification of the holy thing with the holy itself".³⁵ A "confusion between the medium and the content of revelation" occurs.³⁶ Behind Catholicism's positive valuation of the visual arts³⁷ lurks a danger in the doctrine of "*opus operatum*", which regards sacraments as effective by their mere performance without the centred act of faith.³⁸ When a king or a high priest takes on a sacramental character, justice can be denied, because justice has to be suspended before the ultimacy of what is sacramental.³⁹ The polytheistic gods are demonic "because the basis of being and meaning on which they stand is finite" but claimed to be infinite. Tillich observes this distortion as a general mark of the religious

³³Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.22-23. The term 'ethical' is a little ambiguous here, having nothing to do with Tillich's usual sense of prophetic criticism.

³⁴Tillich, *TC*, p.60.

³⁵Tillich, *ERQR*, p.69.

³⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.140.

³⁷Tillich, *UC*, p.39.

³⁸Tillich, *ST III*, p.129.

³⁹Tillich, *ST III*, p.218.

sphere: "Demonization of the holy occurs in all religions day by day, even in the religion which is based on the self-negation of the finite in the Cross of the Christ."⁴⁰

So the move beyond the sacramental stage is demanded for the fuller manifestation of the holy and for the overcoming of demonization when it happens. This move leads sacramental religion towards becoming a world religion, through sacramental religion's freeing itself from its "bondage to a particular realm of sacred objects or persons or books".⁴¹ Sacramental religion becomes universal by accepting the criticism that comes from the *Logos* which represents the universal structure of being. The tendency of divine powers identified with objects to become independent gods can be checked only by subordinating them to the *Logos* "as the self-manifestation of the divine".⁴² With this vital criticism, the sacramental can be preserved in the higher religion because its concrete sacramental objects are now in tension with the universal *Logos*. Thus Tillich's description of the a *kairos* event reflects the character of the sacramental in union with the universal:

The "sacred" or the "holy" inflames, imbues, inspires all reality and all aspects of existence. There is no profane nature or history, no profane ego, and no profane world. All history is sacred history, everything that happens bears a mythical character; nature and history are not separated. Equally, the separation of subject and object is missing; things are considered more as powers than as things.⁴³

So the sacramental survives in the higher, serving as its basis:

No church can survive without a sacramental element. However effectively prophetic criticism serves to make impossible an absolute reliance upon the holy as present, however effectively it opposes every fixation and every objectification of the sacrament, it cannot do away with the sacramental background; indeed, prophetic criticism itself is possible only by virtue of this background.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Tillich, *ST* III, p.109.

⁴¹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.23.

⁴²Tillich, *UC*, p.16.

⁴³Tillich, *PE*, p.43.

⁴⁴Tillich, *PE*, p.109.

It is in the sacramental that Tillich finds the multi-dimensional character of life affirmed, expressing a holistic approach towards reality. Thus he criticizes churches which emphasize the "word", calling for transformation in a legalistic way and in an "exclusively personalistic form", but which fail to include all dimensions of life in their fulfilment (fragmentarily realized in history) as do the strongly sacramental churches, such as the Greek Orthodox.⁴⁵ Contrary to this positive way in which the sacramental is present in the higher religions, it can also enter them without the necessary critique in the name of the universal-concrete ultimate. So "primitive religions are indirectly present and have a persisting influence in every religion",⁴⁶ as in the worship of ancestors in Confucianism and in the ritual elements in Islam.⁴⁷ In essence, the sacramental is both necessary for and not fully overcome in the higher religions.

The facts of the sacramental type being built around the concept of revelation and of the other types being built upon this type have important consequences for our understanding of Tillich's pluralism. Although revelation will be discussed as a criterion of Tillich's pluralism later ("Revelation and Its Reception"), it is important to show its (foundational) place in his religious typology. We have already shown that Tillich has fulfilled his intention of defining the concept of revelation "in such a way that the idea of a universal revelation is accepted", which concept then "becomes the presupposition of every concrete and particular revelation".⁴⁸ So the sacramental type affirms each revelation and consequently each corresponding religion which satisfies the sacramental (or revelatory) structure. This is nothing other than an affirmation of the *plurality* of both *revelations* and *religions* in a fundamental way by virtue of the sacramental type being the foundation of all other types. But is not affirmation of a pluralism based on a common revelation structure an ignoring of other interpretative

⁴⁵Tillich, *STIII*, pp.402-403.

⁴⁶Tillich, *ERQ*, p.6.

⁴⁷Tillich, *DF*, pp.66,65.

⁴⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.64.

methods in the history of religions for the interpretation of the vast phenomena of the history of religions? The revelation structure that Tillich presents here mainly suggests the unconditional seriousness with which an individual or community relates to the sacramental object. So in principle other interpretative methods are necessary to show how the unconditional devotion was expressed in actual terms in a religious community.

The rise to a world religion, according to Tillich, will take one of two forms, the *mystical* or the *ethical*,⁴⁹ the difference between the two types primarily attributable to the two respective emphases of the holy and their consequences. So the holy as "given" and the holy as "ought-to-be" in their manifestations as higher religions are defined in a way similar to the substance-form correlation. Mystical religion regards the eternal "as present, as that which supports and fills the present and its temporal forms with meaning". And ethical religion regards the eternal "as that which stands beyond all time and every temporal form, which lays its demands upon them and judges them".⁵⁰ We discuss mystical religion now.

3. Mystical Religion

Tillich's understanding of mystical religion should be seen primarily in terms of the two-fold manifestations of the holy and of the revelatory situation in which the manifestations take place. The holy as "given" and the holy as "ought-to-be" in their manifestations to the human person impact on her/him as immediately present or as exercising a judging and transforming influence. Human finitude does not allow an experience of these two manifestations of the holy in an integrated or balanced manner, resulting in the predominance of one of them. But since the judging function will in a stronger or weaker way raise the question whether the medium through

⁴⁹Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.23-24.

⁵⁰Tillich, *RS*, p.160.

which the ultimate is experienced in sacramental religion expresses real ultimacy - exposing the inadequacy of a finite object to represent the infinite - a move beyond the sacramental is demanded. Tillich says: "This question is the dynamic force in the history of religion, revolutionizing the sacramental type of faith and driving faith beyond in different directions."⁵¹ There are two main directions faith takes or types in which faith operates.

One of these is the mystical type of religion. Now although the holy as "ought-to-be" has been responsible for the transition beyond the sacramental, the holy as "ought-to-be" is not predominant in every higher type of religion. In fact in the first higher type which we are considering now the holy as "being" is predominant. Tillich does not explain how this shift takes place. He is not inclined to introduce another category to represent the mystical either, because that would threaten the two-fold nature of the holy he has proposed. We might explain the shift by recalling the "revelatory process": the infinite mediated through the finite to the receiving person or community. This revelatory process is realized in the mystical path by the finite medium being removed so that the individual or community participates in the infinite itself. Tillich notes that this sense of mysticism is present in the Augustinian tradition which affirms "the experience of the identity of subject and object in relation to Being itself".⁵² We must stress here that what Tillich refers to as mystical in his typology is primarily the element of *participation* in every type of relation. Only in a secondary sense does it refer to a special form of religion.⁵³

But this idea of transcending the finite completely is not a common experience in life. So lesser to greater forms of transcendence are to be expected. Tillich does not

⁵¹Tillich, *DF*, p.59. See also *ibid.*, pp.56-59.

⁵²Tillich, *TC*, p.14.

⁵³P. Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, London: Collins (Fontana Library), 1962, p.156 (hereafter cited as Tillich, *CTB*).

engage in identifying these, but simply defines the general mode of transcendence, that is, transcending "every piece of reality as well as reality as a whole".⁵⁴ This is transcendence in its most comprehensive form, or rather a claim about the possibility of a comprehensive transcendence: "a leap which must be made out of time, even supra-mundane time, into eternity".⁵⁵ Tillich believes that this transcendence is possible in a fragmentary manner.⁵⁶ R.C. Zaehner presents four forms of transcendence.⁵⁷ Earlier Otto identified the common mark of all types of mysticism as "identification" attained by the self in relation to the ultimate "in different degrees of completeness".⁵⁸ Tillich would prefer to restrict the term "identification" to an extreme claim only, and suggests that there is no point asking whether the reaching of such a state is possible for human beings.⁵⁹ Since identification suggests transcendence of the subject-object split (of the divine as opposed to the human), "every experience of the divine is mystical".⁶⁰

An important question that arises here is whether it is the *same* ultimate that is reached irrespective of the different religious traditions from which the striving takes place. Tillich does not answer this question directly, but we can expect his answer to be along the following lines. The content of one's ultimate concern should be being-

⁵⁴Tillich, *DF*, p.60.

⁵⁵Tillich, *RS*, p.168.

⁵⁶Tillich, *ST III*, p.257.

⁵⁷R.C. Zaehner presents four forms of transcendence. The first two are transcending the realities of space and time, and the third the resisting of becoming by identifying oneself with being. The fourth and final stage of mysticism is believed by Zaehner to have had revolutionary impact on Indian mysticism since the *Bhagavad-Gita's* statement about the state of communion with God in attaining union with God: 'Who standing firm on unity communes in love with me as abiding in all beings, in whatever state he be, that athlete of the spirit abides in me.' (*Gita* 6:31. quoted in R. C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord: The Interdependence of Faiths*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970, p.204. See also *ibid.*, pp.200-5. *ibid.*) We shall soon see how Tillich sees a union-communion dialectic in mysticism.

⁵⁸Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, John W Harvey (trans.), London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936, p.22.

⁵⁹Tillich, *CTB*, pp.153-154.

⁶⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.256.

itself. But in historical existence one has only a fragmentary experience of and understanding of the universal structures of being-itself. So one can only be in a creative tension with being-itself, maintaining both sides of the relation and transforming the self in the power of being-itself. Tillich's idealism is evident here: that although from one's concrete religious perspective one can only express her/his understanding of being-itself in a specific, and hence unique, way, being-itself and its universal structures are the absolute, unchanging *ground* of one's being and thinking. Kung too affirms the absoluteness of God in this connection,⁶¹ but disapproves the idea of the availability of the same religious (mystical) experience to people of different religions. The reason for his disapproval is that every religious experience bears the stamp of the particular religion within which it is actual, that is, "religious experience is a priori interpreted experience".⁶²

The issue of the *same* ultimate is also addressed indirectly by Tillich in terms of one of his important theological presuppositions, namely that of the infinite distance between the ultimate and human beings. In fact Tillich corrects his earlier position of denying mystical religion this tenet. In his German period he stated that the mystic's belief that the infinite can be reached "in degrees of elevation" fails to take seriously the gap between the infinite and finite.⁶³ But in his later *Dynamics of Faith*, he sees the mystical religion untenable without this theological presupposition: "The mystic is aware of the infinite distance between the infinite and the finite, and accepts a life of preliminary stages of union with the infinite, interrupted only rarely, and perhaps never, in this life by the final ecstasy."⁶⁴ Thus this tenet confirms the

⁶¹The two criteria that Kung suggests for the analysis of mystical experiences in empirical terms are: "Religion should remain religious not only so that god may remain God (the Absolute); but religion should also not be disengaged from morality, so that man may remain human." (Kung, "A Christian Response", pp. 169-173 (esp. pp. 171, 173).

⁶²Kung, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, p. 234.

⁶³Tillich, *PE*, p. 77.

⁶⁴Tillich, *DF*, p. 62.

absoluteness of God, not in any sense of "radical otherness", but in the sense of the certainty, ultimacy and universality of the ultimate as against the limited realizations and understandings that the finite possesses of itself and of its ground. This, however, seems to contradict the basic concept of mysticism, which is that of immediacy - "immediate participation in the divine Ground by elevation into unity with it, transcending all finite realities and all finite symbols of the divine...."⁶⁵ There is no contradiction as far as Tillich's theology is concerned, for it is dialectic and affirms both tenets, that of "infinite distance" and "immediacy". Without the element of "participation" one would be unaware of one's essential nature from which one is separated infinitely, and without "infinite distance" participation in the proper sense of participating in the divine would give way to regarding one's existential state as the essential state. The acknowledgment of the importance of immediacy also has a consequence for the mystical conception of God in that there is immediate certainty about God.⁶⁶

This approach of Tillich therefore has the promise of analyzing various forms of mysticism, mysticism as a whole, and prophetism, all of which are regarded to be in conflict with one another. Tillich identifies a form of mysticism, which, like some idealists and spiritualists (the so-called Enthusiasts of the Reformation and of the early eighteenth century), sees revelation as *recollection* of what one has potentially, and not as *reception* of the Word of God that comes from without,⁶⁷ which is the understanding of revelation. In this form "infinite distance" is not affirmed because both the knowledge and the power to attain to the infinite is within oneself. This form therefore gives some basis for the absolute contrast made between mysticism and faith by Protestant theologians from Ritschl to Barth. So the criticism of these theologians

⁶⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.91.

⁶⁶Tillich, *RS*, pp.163-165.

⁶⁷See Tillich, *ST I*, pp.125-126.

is based on knowledge of a very limited form of mysticism. Tillich, on the contrary, is aware of the more viable forms of mysticism which accord with mysticism's basic premises, and contends that "faith" is present in the mystic in the mystic's recognition that union with the ultimate is not a perfection to be achieved but a gift to be received.⁶⁸

The fact that mysticism transcends sacramental religion but does not destroy it suggests that there are *complex types* (both genuine and distorted) of mystical religion. Tillich does not develop these types, but shows their character by analyzing particular cases in history. Thus he contrasts the impoverished character of modern mysticism with the more positive character of ancient mysticism. Modern mysticism states that by itself it cannot create religious forms - which is correct when mysticism is defined as the transcendence of all finite forms. It sets aside concrete religion, and instead of breaking through to the eternal in all seriousness confines religion to the aesthetic forms of some special ancient period. The ancient mystic is shown to be different. Although the mystic transcended cult and sacrament, s/he did not criticize them.⁶⁹ Thus mysticism that took on a sacramental-priestly spirit could provide a "worshipful atmosphere which nurtured and maintained all life and in which the whole personality, not only its central essence, lived and moved".⁷⁰ Tillich's religious typology recognizes subtle forms of mystical religion which emerge by association with other types.

Now we turn to Tillich's identification of two main ways of understanding transcendence of the historical existence, which are concretely expressed in Eastern and Western (Christian) mysticism. Transcendence in its most radical form can be said to be the ultimate negation of one's existence in time and space,⁷¹ and is professed in

⁶⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.77.

⁶⁹Tillich, *RS*, p.165.

⁷⁰Tillich, *RS*, p.161.

⁷¹See Tillich, *ST I*, p.140.

this way by the Indian traditions.⁷² This mysticism which tries to transcend the subject-object character of human existence is however susceptible to "the danger of annihilating the centred self, the subject of the ecstatic experience of the Spirit".⁷³ But the following quotation from Dasgupta shows that the state of supra-consciousness (*prajnana*) only temporarily surpasses the ordinary conscious states and allows them to return to their ordinary functions.

This experience is not something which is wholly beyond, or wholly out of all relation with, our conscious states of dual experience. For it is the basis, or background, as it were, of all our ordinary knowledge involving the knower and the known.⁷⁴

There is a remarkable similarity between this and Tillich's idea of 'ecstatic reason'. The important difference between Dasgupta's and Tillich's understanding of transcending the subject-object scheme is that, whereas the former believes in a special (supra-) consciousness as distinct from ordinary consciousness, the latter's account suggests the *immediate* presence of the holy experienced through transcendence as against the mediated experience of finite objects. Another differentiating mark between the two mysticisms that might be suggested is that, whereas in the Indian kind self is unreal apart from the true self, Brahman, and consequently the human self identifies itself with the divine self, in the Christian kind the emphasis is on the reality of both the human and the divine, the holy not absorbing the human individual but being present in the human and in all finite realities.⁷⁵ Yet another difference is that, for Dasgupta the spiritual aim is a "formless self", but for Tillich the aim is "to preserve in the ecstatic experience the subjects of faith and love: personality and community".⁷⁶ So for Tillich, the mystical should maintain both the centred self and the ultimate ground.

⁷²Tillich, *ERQR*, p.52.

⁷³Tillich, *ST III*, pp.152-153.

⁷⁴Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism*, p.39.

⁷⁵See Tillich, *ST III*, p.257.

⁷⁶Tillich, *ST III*, p.153.

To briefly evaluate this section, Tillich has a dialectic tension between the holy as given and the holy as ought, which while giving equal emphasis to both sides of the relation suggests that the holy as given is the proper starting point for theology. The reason for this was seen to be evident in human experience. We first acknowledge that the holy is given or present in us and in bearers of the holy before the ought question addresses us, again from the holy. This starting point has special significance for appreciating the *commonness* of the different mysticisms and for the *consistency* of Tillich's typology. Thus Tillich shows that even in the case of Christianity, which shall very shortly see to be a prophetic religion, the mystical element is primary. For instance, to overcome their experience of "the anxiety of meaninglessness" Thomas Munzer and Martin Luther "transcended the courage of confidence which is based on a personal encounter with God. They had to receive elements from the courage to be, which is based on mystical union."⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Tillich rightly points out that the mystical on its own cannot be an adequate form of religion because of its tendency to be non-personal, non-social and non-historical.⁷⁸ "The merely vertical line transforms history into a circle with the belief that all human action is nothing other than a strengthening of *maya*, of the world of illusion."⁷⁹ One loses one's personal nature by characterizing oneself in terms of one's ground or by identifying oneself with one's ground. Mysticism does not take the social dimension seriously because it gives importance to ethical demands only as means, although Wach claims that the ethical aspect plays an "immense role" in the life of Buddhists.⁸⁰ The secondary character of ethics in the life of Buddhists is

⁷⁷Tillich, *CTB*, p.166

⁷⁸Tillich, *CEWR*, p.88.

⁷⁹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.51.

⁸⁰Joachim Wach, "Introduction: The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions (*Religionswissenschaft*)" in Joseph M. Kitagawa *et. al.* (eds.), *The History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p.5.

evident from the fact that moral commands are given as part of the way to end suffering, which is *nirvana*, or final release. Despite Buddhism's criticisms of the caste system, its mystical approach did not provide a theological basis for appreciating the presence of the divine in society, but only made compassion an imperative for the social sphere. So the solution here is one of escaping reality, not being creative, nor emphasizing transformation in culture and history. We must also point out here that the advaita vedantin's "neti, neti", which is a negation of the reality of every finite reality, is an approach that does not see the relative value of encountered finite objects because no aim is possible in history. In contrast to this absolute no is Tillich's dialectic of yes and no, recognizing that history has an aim, a *telos*. Later (in Chapter IV) we shall show the importance Tillich gives to history in terms of the concept "centre of history".

Tillich finds Indian mysticism's emphasis on the vertical line, which "carries to that which transcends all possibilities of man in his temporal and spatial existence, namely the eternal", necessarily lacking in "an inner relation to time", time and the temporal being regarded as "falling away from the eternity of the divine". It is in this connection that Tillich strongly suggests a Christian approach in terms of the Protestant principle that performs the vertical function by fully affirming time, eternity regarded not as "not without time" but as "another time".

In the application of the Protestant principle, time, like everything created, is good and where there is time there is subject-object difference and there is a possibility of everything which happens in the subject-object form is rooted.⁸¹

In conclusion, mysticism has been seen as a higher type than the sacramental and as preserving the sacramental. We have highlighted Tillich's identification of several kinds of mysticism and have shown that they become comprehensible in terms of Tillich's typology of religions. How some forms of mysticism connect with other

⁸¹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.52.

types in the typology has also shown the usefulness of Tillich's typology. His development of the mystical type from basic tenets, which accord with Eastern and Western mysticism, has proved to have a proper grounding as well as the flexibility to comprehend various forms of mysticism. And, finally, we have seen that the polarity of elements and polarity of types of approach have given Tillich the bases for defining the mystical as an essential aspect of religion and for critiquing the mystical when its creative tension with the prophetic is lost.

The first of the two directions, namely the mystical, in which the transcendence of sacramental religion takes place has been discussed. The second direction is towards "ethical holiness",⁸² which we shall now consider.

4. Ethical Religion

Ethical (or prophetic) religion emerges from sacramental religion by criticizing and thereby dissolving "the primitive unity between the holy and the real". Due to this criticism, although the holy is not unrelated to the finite realm and its objects, the presence of the holy in the finite is denied. Thus, prophetic religion, unlike sacramental religion, "denies that one can "see" God, for sight is the most objectifying sense."⁸³ "To the prophets the holy is primarily a demand. Nothing can be holy apart from the fulfilment of the law."⁸⁴ The emphasis is on "ethical" and "utilitarian" demands as against sacramental religion's ritualistic demands.⁸⁵ Thus the holiness of what ought-to-be becomes predominant. Tillich regards the ethical type as represented in a "basic way" by Judaism in the history of religions and later by

⁸²Tillich, *ERQR*, p.23.

⁸³Tillich, *ST I*, p.172.

⁸⁴Tillich, *PE*, p.108.

⁸⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.108.

contemporary Judaism, Islam and partly Christianity. The shift from the sacramental to the ethical is to be seen in the shift of emphasis from "holiness to righteousness".⁸⁶

Transcending the sacramental has been pointed out to mean the rise to a *universal* religion. To give a concrete example from the history of religions to support the relationship between sacramental and prophetic religion, Tillich refers to Abraham's call. Stating that prophetism has arisen out of "paganism", but with a mission against "paganism", he points out that the significance of Abraham's call expresses a decisive change from understanding God in tribal terms to a characterization of God as almost universal. Tillich sees the call as coming from the unlocalizable God and as ordering Abraham "to leave the gods of soil and blood, of family, tribe and nation".⁸⁷ This idea slowly developed in the history of Israel, and Tillich claims that the turning point in the history of religion in respect of the understanding of God, which was also the overcoming of polytheism, was when the prophet Amos said what was "unheard of in all other religions", namely "that the God of a nation is able to destroy this nation without being destroyed Himself". Time, which gives rise to the idea of history, which in turn is universal, is the basis of the suggestion that God is the God of justice. And for Tillich: "This and this alone is the meaning of prophetic monotheism. God is *one God* because justice is one."⁸⁸ Tillich makes a definite case for the victory of the God of time against the gods of space, even the gods of space of the present time.⁸⁹ So in contrast to the mystical type, a single *concrete* God who excludes all other gods is affirmed, which is the meaning of

⁸⁶Tillich, *ERQR*, p.24. When Tillich is more precise, he sees holiness as including righteousness. So the shift should be from the 'holiness of what is' to the 'holiness of the ought-to-be'.

⁸⁷Tillich, *TC*, p.35. G. Fohrer suggests the rescue from Egypt as the time when faith in Yahweh made "the transition from the religion of a group of nomads to a religion for the world". (Quoted by Kung in Kung, "A Christian Response", p.175.)

⁸⁸Tillich, *TC*, p.38.

⁸⁹Tillich, *TC*, p.39.

exclusive monotheism.⁹⁰ This prophetic tradition is seen by Tillich to give shape to the New Testament message that "God must be adored neither in a temple nor on a mountain, but in Spirit and in Truth". And later in the Christian tradition, at the Reformation, a Protestant protest against the physical space of the Roman Catholic priest took place, manifesting once again the "prophetic negation of the gods of space".⁹¹ Hence in prophetism there is a preference of time and history in respect of understanding God over against the category of space and space-related conceptions of the divine.

It is important to note not only prophetism's affirmation of history, but the way it is affirmed. Prophetic religion affirms that history has direction because God is God of history. So history moves towards an end, from a beginning, and has a centre which contains the aim of the end. Prophetism, which is also present in Marxism, regards the "victory of justice" in the struggle between the forces of good and evil, which make up the content of history, as the aim of history. History, in prophetism, has the power to judge the existing order of society. Spiritual creations like Religious Socialism and Marxism have, for Tillich, "an infinite, inexhaustible meaning because they represent a lasting type of spiritual possibility.... They will return again and again in different shapes, based on their original, classical appearance".⁹² The directedness toward the future is seen by Tillich to be the distinguishing feature of ethical religion from the sacramental and mystical types.

So ethical religion is primarily concerned about the relationship between God who is universal and the same God who acts in a concrete way. This is why "the prophetic protest is necessary for every church and for every secular movement if it is

⁹⁰Tillich, *ERQR*, p.25.

⁹¹Tillich, *TC*, pp.36-37.

⁹²Tillich, *PE*, pp.254,260.

to avoid disintegration".⁹³ Prophetism calls for a creation of the new in person, in society and in history, and even beyond history, through its symbols like "new creature" and "Kingdom of God". Concrete transformation is required in the particular cultural dimension and existential context but in the light of the criterion of universality - the idea of universality being attained through another source, namely history, although not unconnected with the concern for justice.⁹⁴

Prophetic criticism is seen by Tillich to have been active in not only the Old and New Testaments but also in religions and revolutions outside Christianity, "as in the religion of Zoroaster, in some of the Greek mysteries, in Islam, and in many smaller reform movements".⁹⁵ But, as we shall briefly see, Tillich sees these other religions to be less developed than Christianity. He distinguishes types within the ethical and suggests prominent instantiations of the respective types in history:

The juristic type is most strongly developed in Talmudic Judaism and in Islam; the conventional type is most prominent in Confucianist China; the ethical type is represented by the Jewish prophets.⁹⁶

The Islamic faith focuses on the revelation mediated by the prophet Mohammed, the content of the revelation being ritual and social laws. Therefore, what is decisive for the follower of Islam is not Mohammed but a *consecrated order* which determines the daily life of people. Tillich doubts that the manifestation of the divine in the juristic realm is the divine's ultimate manifestation. He points out the inadequacy of this manifestation when speaking of "legalistic ways of self-salvation". While recognizing that in the legalistic forms of faith revelatory experience is taken with unconditional seriousness, even expressed in the rigorous observance of civil laws, Tillich identifies the distortion happening when the claim is made that the state of estrangement is

⁹³Tillich, *PE*, p.230.

⁹⁴See Tillich, *TC*, p.37.

⁹⁵Tillich, *STI*, p.141.

⁹⁶Tillich, *DF*, p.65.

overcome in the "serious obedience to the commanding law".⁹⁷ The Confucian religion rests on "conventional" rules propagated by Confucius, these commands bearing an unconditional character. The law of the universe is at the root of the laws of state and society. Although the Confucian system affirms transcendence, its basic character is secular.⁹⁸ So ultimate concern here too is not about the divine itself. The nature of Judaism has already been presented, and we found that justice was given universality, which was then attributed to God. Judaism thus represents the basic character of prophetic religion: "There is no pure Spiritual Presence where there is no humanity and justice."⁹⁹ Hence Tillich's criticism of the ethical type represented by Judaism: "The divine law is of ultimate concern in old and new Judaism." ¹⁰⁰

Prophetism's strength lies on the one hand in focusing on the given sacramental system, "the concrete foundation", neither *devaluating* it nor *elevating* oneself above it, in contrast to mysticism. And on the other hand, prophetism's criticism is intended to bring about concrete change in the particular abused system on the basis of the divine law. "Prophetism tries to shape reality in the power of the divine form."¹⁰¹

A criticism might be made against the judging function of religion and theology that Tillich has pointed out as a phenomenon in both mystical and ethical religions, more so in the latter. Although judgment or criticism or mutual criticism is an acceptable exercise within the academic and secular worlds, a judgment in the name of the infinite is inconceivable and hence is something to be opposed. The secular public would resist this self-enthronement of religion and theology, and would

⁹⁷Tillich, *ST II*, p. 81.

⁹⁸Tillich, *DF*, pp. 65-6. R. Neville has shown that Confucianism affirms transcendence in the belief that a "loving or lovelike divine source" supports the world and humans. (R. Neville, *Behind the Masks of God*, New York: State University of New York, p.119)

⁹⁹Tillich, *ST III*, p.153.

¹⁰⁰Tillich, *DF*, p.67.

¹⁰¹Tillich, *ST I*, pp.141-142.

suggest that there is no ground for this. Their approach and method is that of recognizing several standpoints and frameworks and their relative validity in relation to the respective reality or area of concern. And as each method is conditioned by the specific reality it investigates, despite that reality's inter-connection with other realities, it is absurd to suggest a comprehensive standpoint that would comprehend, preserve, as well as critique each concrete standpoint. Tillich might seem to be contradicting this largely accepted approach in the theoretical and practical disciplines, with his suggestion of an unconditional prophetic criticism of a given finite reality. But this is not the case, for if we recall what we said under "Religion and Culture", Tillich is clear that theology works from its own *concrete standpoint* but that its primary object is the *universal structure of being*, which structure is in some way addressed by the various cultural disciplines and represented by them. The fact of theology's primary commitment to constantly mediating between its own ultimate concern and the universal structure of being does not mean that only theology has the authentic and final understanding of the universal structure. This is clear from Tillich's suggestion that one has to be a theologian of culture before one does systematic theology (because culture is one of the sources of systematic theology). So the judging function of theology is not exercised from any special premise or body of knowledge unknown to the cultural sciences. Rather, the theologian engages with culture to find *plural* and *differing* accounts of various aspects of reality. This contact with the various cultural expressions will then reveal their "depth" or "meaning" by virtue of the presupposition of faith, which means seeing reality not as self-subsistent but as transparent to its ground. The present or the given reality is affirmed, because the infinite depth is (paradoxically) affirmed to be present in it, the infinite depth at the same time judging the present most seriously. Thus "crisis in the theological sense is as much a matter of faith as grace is."¹⁰² The many ways of identifying the "depth"

¹⁰²Tillich, *PE*, p.78.

then helps to *judge* some of the cultural expressions and to express the universal structure of being in a concrete way (in a concrete theology). Hence in the character of the 'ethical', there is a very important source for Tillich's radical pluralism, a pluralism that not only affirms the plurality of religious forms but of cultural forms too.

The above three types lead in the direction of a higher type which we shall now discuss. It is a higher type because it includes all the three typological elements. The special features of this type are shown by Tillich from the developments and attempts in the Christian tradition.

5. Religion of the Concrete Spirit

Tillich's religious typology, which we have presented thus far, has a fundamental, universal type, and two higher types arising out of the fundamental one. Except in the case of the first type, the sacramental, where the polarity is latent with only the holy as present being manifest, in the other cases the polarities lead to concrete forms within each type and point towards a more *comprehensive type*. This comprehensive type is called "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" by Tillich, and it is sought by all the three elements: the sacramental, mystical and the ethical.¹⁰³ Here sacramental religion's tendency towards demonization, mysticism's devaluation of the concrete manifestation of the holy and ethical religion's tendency to become moralistic and secular are claimed to be overcome. For Tillich the very definition of faith involves affirming the mystical and the prophetic and transcending both of them, because faith as one's relationship to being-itself should contain both elements.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Tillich, *FR*, pp.86-87.

¹⁰⁴Tillich, *CTB*, p.153.

Although Tillich insists that the predominant element in mystical religion, namely the mystical, and the predominant element in ethical religion, namely the ethical, cannot become less important than the other elements in the respective types of concrete religions, Tillich calls for a transcending of the two types for two reasons. The one has to do with the very character of polarity or dialectic, whether in thought or reality, that implies either a higher stage or a grounding fact that precedes the polar elements. The other reason is that Tillich sees religion in its essential nature as realized only fragmentarily in history. No concrete religion can claim to have attained to this perfect character, although without fragmentary actualization of the true character of religion no concrete religion can be true. The two reasons are related because both of them presuppose the *unity* of the sacramental, mystical and ethical as actualized in combinations of these elements in the history of religions. And there is no Christian superiority, for Tillich says clearly in relation to this type that Christianity too only strives to attain it and cannot claim to have actualized this.¹⁰⁵

The three elements are present in each of the types. The sacramental has both the holy as being (the mystical element) and the holy as ought-to-be (the ethical element), but only the former element is manifest. The mystical has the sacramental as its basis, and has the ethical as the way of transforming oneself (or losing one's special qualities) as one moves towards the infinite for identification with it. The ethical has the sacramental as the basis, and has the mystical as the element of participation in God such that there is self-affirmation and affirmation of the given finite reality. Tillich defends the interdependence of these types by pointing out that its basis is the universal ontological categories of participation and individualization.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Tillich, *FR*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁶Tillich, *CTB*, p. 157.

Despite this interdependence, however, there is evidence of Tillich's preference of the ethical type above the other two *types* - without in any way undermining the other two *elements*. Sacramental religion is bound to the gods of space and it constantly produces demonizations. Mysticism reacts against this, but its approach is seen to be weak, for it provides no escape; it "extinguishes time and space" to attain "salvation beyond time". Mysticism might appear to have overcome polytheism, but the many names of gods that disappear in the face of the *nameless one* return later, as happened "in the later ancient period in Greece, and in later Buddhism and Hinduism".¹⁰⁷ Through his understanding of God as "being which overcomes non-being within itself" (which we shall discuss in Chapter IV) Tillich critiques mysticism's understanding of the ultimate: "The radical negation of all forms of being also removes the demonic basis of all being. Only absolute being, pure divinity, is disentangled from the demonic. It is clear that in such a conception, existence is perceived as essentially demonic."¹⁰⁸ So he criticizes ascetic mysticism and mysticism in general for their belief that "absolute being has the quality of standing beyond the creative forms, and also beyond community and personality", thereby associating human existence, and along with it all creative forms, with the demonic. He, however, values Occidental mysticism, whose original type Tillich sees in Neoplatonism, more positively, because here "existence is not evaluated purely as decline" as in the Indian type, but as "an overflow of the absolute, superbeing".¹⁰⁹

Mysticism's attack on sacramentalism, with the consequent denial of all the sacramental mediums, does not merit it with significance in regard to receiving the "centre of history", which happens when the "larger basis of the history of religion" (sacramental religion) is transformed by the "smaller basis of prophetic criticism".¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷Tillich, *TC*, pp.34-35.

¹⁰⁸Tillich, *IH*, p.102.

¹⁰⁹Tillich, *IH*, pp.102-103.

¹¹⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.389.

It is only prophetic religion with its affirmation of history which can witness to that self-transcending point in history ("the centre of history" - to be discussed under "Christ the Criterion"), a point which is also the meaning and aim of history. Since only prophetic religion focuses on culture, only the Old Testament prophets can set the *conditions* ("the maturity was reached; the time was fulfilled") for the central manifestation and reception of Jesus as the Christ¹¹¹ within the larger Jewish consciousness. It alone has the *quest* for the Christ in terms of its maturity, which is

the ability to receive the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God but also the greatest power to resist it. For maturity is the result of education by the law, and in some who take the law with radical seriousness, maturity becomes despair of the law, with the ensuing quest for that which breaks through the law as "good news".¹¹²

Tillich makes a connection between Judaism and Christianity: that education by law was necessary to appreciate the coming of the Messiah. Judaism and Christianity are related as quest and fulfilment, as *preparation* and *reception* - two important aspects of the final revelation. In this understanding, then, the link is so inseparable that Christianity cannot claim that it surpasses Judaism, because the idea of the Christ cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament historically and theologically. So it must be observed that Tillich's use of "fulfilment" in respect of Christianity is in a relational way, affirming "quest" and "fulfilment" as two sides of a single phenomenon. This argument then leads us to see Tillich as an objective interpreter of the history of religion in so far as it concerns the Judaism and Christianity of the Old Testament and New Testament periods. Tillich sees Christianity alone rising to the "Religion of Concrete Spirit" without losing its identity as an ethical religion. Thus although "judgment of idolatry is the function of the prophet and the mystic",¹¹³ only

¹¹¹Tillich, *ST* III, p.389.

¹¹²Tillich, *ST* III, p.394.

¹¹³Tillich, *UC*, p.51.

prophetic religion comes out as the most important religious type in this typological scheme, with its affirmation of the vertical in a dynamic relation with the horizontal.

The special character of the ethical might also be a *concrete* appreciation of the *universal* through the idea of "God being the *source of justice for all*", as evident in Judaism. But despite Judaism's affirmation of justice as a universal principle, it did not manage to counter the idea of "elected nation". The reason for this is that the universal that has been reached is not the true universal. The true universal is the holy itself, and only the holy itself can express the vertical "no" to any attempt to use the idea of elected nation in the name of the supposed universal.

Tillich recognizes that a Christian theologian will naturally see Christianity as "the aim toward which the dynamics of faith are driving", the dynamics referring to the movements of the religious types seeking reunion with each other.¹¹⁴ In fact he sees in Christianity convergences of the types with varying emphases:

Christianity is the most embracing religious phenomenon.... Adolf Harnack...once said that he who knows the history of Christianity knows implicitly the whole history of religion because in the history of Christianity all religious phenomena have appeared and have been taken in and have been pushed out again or transformed. It is the greatness of the original church and the greatness of classical Roman Catholicism that it rightly claims to be the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coincidence of the opposites of all types. This was possible because each type, if you look critically at it, has already within itself elements of the counter-type and that, of course, cannot be otherwise.¹¹⁵

Tillich sometimes refers not to Christianity as a whole but to Protestant Christianity when stating that it is "the point in which the different types converge", although as in every case it is "open to idolatrous distortions".¹¹⁶ There is a special claim made here for Christian actualizations of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", and Tillich might want to justify this claim by referring to what he has expressed elsewhere: being more

¹¹⁴Tillich, *DF*, p.70-71.

¹¹⁵Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.25-26. See also Tillich, *CEWR*, p.82.

¹¹⁶Tillich, *DF*, p.97.

firmly historical Christianity addresses more polar tensions than Buddhism, which is indifferent towards history.¹¹⁷

We might suggest that one of Tillich's important theological concepts, namely, the Protestant principle, can also be seen to have the polar elements of the mystical and the prophetic directly and to have the sacramental as the universal type underlying it. Tillich claims that Christianity alone shows the dynamics of faith in clearer terms than others, maintaining the infinite distance between God and humans and at the same time affirming the possibility of overcoming one's estrangement:

From the power of self-criticism and from the courage to face one's own relativity come the greatness and danger of the Protestant faith. Here more than anywhere else the dynamics of faith become manifest and conscious: the infinite tension between the absoluteness of its claim and the relativity of its life.¹¹⁸

The "absoluteness" and "relativity" that is contrasted here is the paradox in the claim of union with God in spite of one's finitude. It is the question: How does one know the answer from the side of the infinite while one is still within the conditions of finiteness? The special claim that Tillich makes here is that of Christianity having grasped the nature of the divine-human relationship properly and identified the dangers correctly. There is no idea here of Christianity possessing a truth received directly and exclusively from an absolute supranatural divine, or having a pure doctrine to offer everyone, or having a special right to mediate an absolute judgment. We shall discuss this further under "Theological Criticism: Protestant Principle".

In regard to the union of types, Tillich's suggestion of there being not just one way for the polar elements or polar types to unite in their concrete manifestation is both affirmative of *pluralism* and sensitive to the respective *historical* situation. The polar tensions are resolved through possible unions most adequate for the particular

¹¹⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, p.74.

¹¹⁸Tillich, *DF*, p.57.

instance.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the systematic principle is also equally effective. That is, the element that is predominant in a certain type will usually continue to be predominant in every subsequent actualization of the union. Thus there will be a difference between the way the mystical religions see salvation and the way the prophetic religions see it. The mystical religions see salvation as leaving history and returning to the Eternal from which one has come, whereas the prophetic religions see God as fulfilling his promise of leading humankind toward the future.¹²⁰

When the difference between mystical religion and ethical religion is so great in regard to a particular religious phenomenon like salvation, in what way is one to achieve a union of types? Tillich makes an attempt to do this from the side of ethical religion and mystical religion, pointing out the interdependence of the two elements: "They are compatible only if the one is an element of the other; two attitudes toward the ultimate could not exist beside each other if the one were not given with the other."¹²¹ He does this convincingly only in his portrayal of the presence of the mystical in the ethical. Suggesting that faith in ethical religion involves an "ecstatic experience" and hence an overcoming of the cleavage between subject and object, Tillich identifies the mystical in ethical religion. At the same time ethical religion's emphasis on concreteness leads it to exercising courage and risk. Now speaking from the side of mystical religion, Tillich states: "There is faith in mystical experience... This follows from the fact that both faith and mystical experience are states of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence."¹²² But he does not show how the ethical element can be actual in mystical religion which aims at transcending the subject-object experience. Elsewhere he takes care to state that the mystical does not eliminate the subject-object scheme, but proposes "to find something above the split in which it is

¹¹⁹See Tillich, *CEWR*, p.55.

¹²⁰Tillich, *FR*, pp.66-67.

¹²¹Tillich, *ST III*, p.257.

¹²²Tillich, *ST III*, p.257.

conquered and preserved".¹²³ Although this qualification helps to preserve the identity of the divine Other and the finite other in one's relationships, it is difficult to see how Tillich will propose the possibility of cultural creations and cultural diversity in this higher realm. The claims of Indian scholars that the mystic enters the ordinary human realm with a higher consciousness to be active in the cultural realm is not entertained by Tillich, perhaps because such a claim does not conform to the fundamental mystical notion of participation in the divine. Only where individualization is affirmed is there the possibility of creation of forms.

It is possible that Tillich's typology is either incapable of helping the mystical find a way of taking the ethical into it in creative ways or needs to be developed in the light of further enquiries into Hinduism and Buddhism. However, Tillich's typology is helpful in offering criticisms to mystical and ethical religions. From the side of the mystical, one could on the one hand use the principle of 'participation' to show ethical religion the Eternal's judgment on each temporal form, and on the other hand view its own religious contents in the light of ethical religion's judgment on mystical religion's "inward reality", "superconsciousness", "spiritual discipline" for becoming exclusive, and not taking seriously one's part in the physical, social, moral and cultural realities. And the prophet can on the one hand use the principle of "separation" to show mystical religion's spiritual exercises and sense of identification with the ultimate as lacking in concreteness and hence lacking relevance for the spatio-temporal realm, and on the other hand examine its own religious contents in the light of mystical religion's judgment of ethical religion's tendency to lose itself in endless creations of spiritual forms.

The "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is a higher type because there is a strong *drive* from within mystical religion and ethical religion to be related to each other.

¹²³Tillich, *ST* III, p.98.

And since the drive towards the other is always indicative of an *integrative* process as against a fleeing from the other which has a disintegrative consequence, "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is a higher type. So the higher type proposes that mystical religion revise itself in the light of the ethical in order to unite with it, and that ethical religion revise itself in the light of the mystical in order to unite with it. The intention here of the concrete religious tradition being the starting point of developing a higher religious form suggests the impossibility of either a *common* or a *final* form. The attaining of higher forms depends on the seriousness of the attempt and the nature of the situation, religion in Tillich's view requiring reunion with the ground, which implies the overcoming of estrangement in all spheres. It is for this reason that Tillich rejects any attempt to "sketch a general line of religious progress in human history". This is because in the history of religion "each gain in one respect is accompanied by a loss in another respect".¹²⁴ The typology presupposes the contingent character of human life, which according to Tillich is lived out by the working of polar principles such as the subjective and objective, freedom and destiny, individual and social, mystical and ethical, etc. In a particular historical expression, the way in which both the poles are present is unique. Here again we encounter Tillich's pluralism, which while affirming that there are *universally* valid religious elements does insist on working from and revising the special constitution of the religious types from one's *concrete* religious tradition.

6. Evaluation of Typology of Religion

An evaluation of Tillich's typology must now be made. First, we shall examine if his "typology" is consistent with his "concept" of religion, especially in the way the concept is implied in the religion-culture relation, which has been pointed out as

¹²⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.219.

fundamental in Tillich's theology. The parallel between Tillich's religion-culture correlation and his religious typology could be shown in the following way. Religion *identified with* culture, where the two are indistinguishable both in reality and thought, can correspond to the sacramental type. Religion *rejecting* culture totally in theory but using selected cultural forms in practice has similarities with the mystical type. And religion *judging* culture with a view to *transforming* it will obviously show itself as the basis of the ethical type. If this parallel is valid, then at least an inner consistency in Tillich could be asserted.

This inner consistency is also evident in the way Tillich presents a quasi-religion demonstrating the two critical polar elements. He sees humanism as falling both on the side of the ontological type of faith (mystical religion) as "romantic-conservative" and the moral type of faith (ethical religion) as the "progressive-utopian". In the first case the content of ultimate concern is the given in nature and history, affirming "the holy in the flower as it grows, in the animal as it moves, in man as he represents a unique individuality, in a special nation, a special culture, a special social system".¹²⁵ Here he sees humanism as "an attitude which makes man the measure of his own spiritual life" and in which "the ultimate concern of man is man". Humanism is secular in that it sees the finite reality as ultimate, unlike mysticism for which the ultimate lies beyond finite reality.¹²⁶ Humanism "is faith, but it hides the dimension of the ultimate which it presupposes." It can become empty, and when this happens humanists return to the religious forms from which they originally arose.¹²⁷

The *mutual immanence* of the typological elements, either potentially or actually, suggests an approach that is interested in the particular character of a religion in a concrete situation. It suggests that every historical religion has within it

¹²⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.64.

¹²⁶Tillich, *DF* p.62-63.

¹²⁷Tillich, *DF*, p.64.

the critical power to judge itself, although dialogue with other religions may make the criticism both more concrete and more universal. This is evident in Tillich's positive valuation of primitive religion, and he does not see primitive religion as absent in or irrelevant for any period of human history. He remarks that primitive mythology is extremely profound because it asks and answers the fundamental human question of what we ourselves are.¹²⁸ Tillich's idea that the sacramental is present in the higher religions is valid to lesser or greater extents, especially as they influence rituals, as they influence the community's attitude towards cosmic forces, and as they foster a cyclical pattern in many areas of life.¹²⁹ And Tillich's general criticism of the cyclical approach, that the new in history is neither envisaged nor recognized, would apply here too.

This immanence of types would face a threat from exponents of the Indian tradition, who see a body-spirit distinction and duality as the explanation for a move from primitive religion to mystical religion. The sacramental-mystical relation that Tillich holds is in no way comparable to Dasgupta's account of a mainly two-fold character of religion in the development of religion in India: earlier religions emphasizing the body, and later religions emphasizing the spirit. The earlier sacrificial mysticism suggested attainment of merits through observance of the Vedic and ritualistic injunctions and prohibitions such that blessings of life related to the body would follow.¹³⁰ Opposed to this was the Upanishadic aim, which became the source of all future mysticism. Here the emphasis was on fulfilling the spiritual needs of the

¹²⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.86.

¹²⁹Thus in present Hindu ritual performances, the cosmic character of life is reflected in many rituals. Also, the cyclical notion that is present in the sacramental is reflected in the way one ritual is repeated many times over, the beginning and end of which is unnoticeable, especially since people join the ritual at any point and stay for just a small part of a ritual or for a number of full performances.

¹³⁰S.N. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism*, New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., [1927] 1971, pp.3-57.

Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism*, pp.3-57.

soul which was the attainment of immortality - not of the *personal* kind, which suggests a decayless, diseaseless, deathless existence, nor of the *bodily existence* kind, which thinks in terms of sensual joys and sense gratifications. The genuine immortality was possible through a quest of the highest truth and reality, the Brahman. This immortality that mysticism sought meant the attainment of a superconscious. The conflict in the interpretations does not immediately disprove Tillich's typology; nor is Dasgupta's account dismissed. They are both to be examined in terms of other phenomena of the same religious complex and also in the light of general theological criteria like the continuity from one stage of religion to another and how the earlier form is preserved in the new development. Without going into a full discussion, it might just help to see the relative merits of the one interpretation against the other. Whereas Dasgupta's account is a spiritualist interpretation which sees the earlier stage as one that must be overcome, Tillich's typology preserves the earlier stage as the universal basis. But the difficulty with the typology is that it is a revelation model which assumes that the sacramental object functioned as the ultimate concern of the primal society; hence whether such a revelation approach is valid in the case of Indian religion demands further enquiry.

The tendency towards mysticism in Indian religion can receive a correction from Tillich's approach of the mutual immanence of types, particularly in respect of a theology of religions. Mysticism's general tenet that one has to transcend the multiplicity of experiences to enter the higher consciousness, which in Indian traditions is regarded as a static state, is in principle absolutist because it negates all relativities characterizing the spatio-temporal world. Mysticism would claim that it has transcended all systems that speak of truths related to the mundane existence. Now since Tillich does not follow this mystical notion of the human attempting to reach the divine through rigorous discipline but understands the mystical as affirming the immediacy between the human and the divine on account of the divine's presence

in the human, he is not intolerant of relativities. He sees the absolute and the relative in a dialectical tension, as has been indicated under "Religion and Culture" and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Despite the importance of *each* of the three typological elements for the essential character of religion, there does seem to be a certain preference for ethical religion in Tillich, which if true will certainly throw doubts on his pluralism. Although in terms of the particular value of each element Tillich gives equal importance to "union" and "participation" (which are predominant in mysticism) and "separation" and "individualization" (which are predominant in ethical religion), he does speak more highly of ethical religion because of its expression of ultimate concern in terms of historical myths as against the natural myths of the other religious types.

If the earth is seen as the battleground of two divine powers, as in ancient Persia, this is an historical myth. If the God of creation selects and guides a nation through history toward an end which transcends all history, this is an historical myth. If the Christ - a transcendent, divine being - appears in the fullness of time, lives, dies and is resurrected, this is an historical myth. Christianity is superior to those religions which are bound to a natural myth.¹³¹

Here Tillich accords Christianity superiority because of its interest in history, in recognizing meaning in history. We shall later see that this interest in history is also the basis for making a special claim for the final revelation in relation to the Christ, although final revelation in Tillich is a concept which applies to the central symbol of a religion.

The sacramental type is basic, and is present in both mystical and prophetic religions, because it provides the "sacramental-priestly substance", which is the symbolic power of the sacramental object preserved by the priest, for future revelatory events, including the final revelation.¹³² This type, according to Tillich,

¹³¹Tillich, *DF*, p.54.

¹³²Tillich, *ST I*, pp.139-144.

cannot prepare for final revelation because of the 'ambiguity' that surrounds it. It has a tendency toward distortion, which is met in three ways: by the mystical, rational and prophetic. The mystical calls for union of the human with its divine ground without the mediation of any finite symbol, and in doing so defeats itself by depriving revelation of its concreteness. So "its power of preparing for the final revelation is ambiguous". The rational criticism of the sacramental is seen by Tillich to have been made by philosophers of all times and by the champions of the mystical and prophetic traditions. The reason why he does not include the rational as a distinct type in his typology is perhaps due to reason's versatile ability to associate with different approaches and illumine them separately as well as indicate connections between them. Reason has this quality because it participates in the depth of reason. Tillich affirms reason's role in shaping the reception of revelation and thereby participating indirectly in the history of revelation.¹³³

The prophetic attack on distorted sacramentalism is for Tillich "decisive" in the preparatory stage for the reception of final revelation. Prophetic attack being always the attempt to set right or transform the *given* distorted system *in concrete terms*, Tillich makes a case for Old Testament prophetism, and not any other prophetism, to be "the direct preparation for final revelation" on the basis of a *concrete* preparation.

The universal revelation [of sacramental religion] as such could not have prepared the final revelation. Since the latter is concrete, only one concrete development could have been its immediate preparation. And since the final revelation is the criterion of every revelation, the criterion of finality must have been envisaged and applied, though fragmentarily and by anticipation.¹³⁴

This emphasis on the concreteness of tradition allows him to choose the concept of "elected nation" as the point of departure, from sacramental religion, towards the

¹³³See Tillich, *ST* I, p. 141.

¹³⁴Tillich, *ST* I, p. 142 (*italics in original*).

concept of final revelation, which he also develops in other ways without referring to the Old Testament.¹³⁵ The concrete focus implies that the election idea is relative to the Jews and the final revelation to Christians, although in both cases the actualization of the respective events is seen as taking place in the cosmos and hence as having universal significance. Tillich's analogy between the Old and New Testament ideas are here given one after another to show this concrete-universal tension.

To be elected includes the permanent threat of rejection and destruction and the demand to accept destruction in order to save the covenant of election. Election and destruction are bound together so that no finite being, group, or individual may consider himself as more than a medium of the mystery of being. If, however, a group or single individuals endure this tension, their destruction is their fulfilment. This is the meaning of the prophetic promise which transcends the prophetic threat.¹³⁶

The *particular* (Jewish) nation exists to exemplify the *universal* justice of God. But the *particular* becoming a true vehicle of the *universal* is affirmed in Jesus as the Christ.

Neither the Jewish nation as a whole nor the small "remnant" groups to whom the prophets often referred were able to overcome the identification of the medium with the content of revelation. The history of Israel shows that no group can be the bearer of the final revelation, that it cannot perform a complete self-sacrifice. The breakthrough and the perfect self-surrender must happen in a personal life, or it cannot happen at all. Christianity claims that it has happened and that the moment in which it happened is the center of the history of revelation and indirectly the center of all history.¹³⁷

What is evident here is not Tillich's positive favour for a nation or revelation or religion. He is keen to show the importance of the historical *for God*, and hence God's

¹³⁵Tillich speaks of the final revelation of the Christ in at least three ways. In terms of his theory of symbols, Jesus's sacrifice of his finiteness to himself gives the Christ symbol the status of a symbol that meets all the criteria of a symbol. From the standpoint of his philosophical anthropology, he suggests that only a human person can perform a "centred act". And from the standpoint of his ontology, the dynamics of the ontological elements are more evident in the human person. All three are fulfilled only by the Christ concept.

¹³⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.143.

¹³⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.143.

manifestation of Godself in a nation's life and later in the life of Jesus the Christ, through whom the divine presence in all dimensions of being (the personal participating in various levels of reality) could be affirmed. At the same time the historical should be stressed in relation to *humans* so that they do not divinize the sacramental (demonization) or sacramentalize the divine (relegate God to a sacred sphere) or seek reunion with God beyond history (mysticism).

It is only the emphasis on the historical that appears to place ethical religion in a better light. But the ethical's prophetic voice needs the sacramental as its medium(s) to express itself, and this is possible only by a mystical participation in the divine. The predominantly secular culture of the modern West does raise a problem here, by the question whether the prophetic voice of justice is still present if people are no longer connected with a religious sacramental system or consciously relate themselves to the divine. We have, under "Religion in Quasi-religions", seen Tillich's response to this in terms of secular culture itself having received symbols from religion in former periods which can be used either creatively or demoniacally. Participation in the divine too, although not manifest obviously, is present, based on Tillich's view that justice or any act directed at transformation in the human realm is an expression of the holy as ought-to-be, which cannot be effective without the holy as present - hence the universal presence of the holy as present.

One final, but serious criticism against any typological approach in religion will be considered before we conclude with a comparison of Tillich's typology with a couple of recent typologies. There are two methodologies in the history of religions. Kitagawa calls one the "historical", whose aim is to deal with concrete religions in their particularity and uniqueness and to analyze the processes of changes in them. The other is the "structural", whose concern is the universal features of the concrete religions, and is thus similar to the typological approach that we have been discussing in Tillich. So if the typological is only one of the two methods, then is not Tillich's

approach narrow and does it not need to be complemented by the "historical"? This can be answered from two sides. The one is from the side of the systematic (or structural) principle which underlies typology, and which is a basic frame that comprehends the ways in which religion is expressed: "There is no progressive development which goes on and on, but there are elements in the experience of the Holy which are always there, if the Holy is experienced."¹³⁸ The other is from the side of the historical. And it needs only to be pointed out that we have already shown how the types of religions acquire their distinctive general characteristics in the course of the development of the respective religions - the subordinate typological element in a particular type always keeping alive an inner dynamic such that a more adequate religious form would arise. So both the "typological" and the "historical" are seen to be equally important by Tillich. In fact Tillich has pointed in the direction of what Kitagawa proposes, namely that enquiries in one kind will require some engagement with the other kind to be credible. And Tillich is open to the historical for a revision of his typology to comprehend the history of religions. But the development of typologies is crucial for him in three ways: first, the types are the key to understanding the (differently encountered) nature of religion and to defining it as distinct from other cultural inquiries; second, the types are the key to interpreting the various conflicting expressions in the history of a particular religion; and third, the convergence of types is the basis for Tillich to claim the possibility of the "convergence of religions"¹³⁹ (a convergence not in any final form, but in terms of the coming together of the typological elements, because in their essential nature they belong together).

The emphasis on understanding religions in terms of their own historical development and unique categories does pose to theologians the problem of finding common categories for the purpose of comprehending the different religions. Cobb

¹³⁸Tillich, *FR*, p.86.

¹³⁹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.27.

faces this problem squarely and suggests an "ordering activity" ("Order Out of Chaos") that looks at experiences in different religions in terms of new categories, which should be constantly revised when the data of the religions so demand. And Cobb uses Jack Hutchison's three-fold categorization of religions: cosmic, acosmic and theistic.¹⁴⁰ This compares quite closely with Tillich's three main types. Whereas Cobb's approach, which sees the nature of God in terms of the complex pattern of the universe, follows a cosmic model, Tillich's typology is determined by a revelational model that is characteristic of religion. Cobb defends diversity of experiences and of interpretation of experiences by arguing that what one is ultimately concerned about is not ontologically identical with the object of another's ultimate concern. Tillich too, as we have seen, develops his typology on the basis of his two-fold understanding of the holy, thereby recognizing a certain relative element in one's ultimate concern itself. Taking a similar approach to Tillich's mutual immanence of the types, but not developing from a systematic analysis of the nature of the holy as Tillich does, Cobb points out that various windows to what is possible as in the case of Advaita's acosmism and Ramanuja's theism within Hinduism.

A two-fold typology adopted by Hick is also quite comparable to Tillich's. Hick sees as pre-axial, those religions which are "centrally (but not solely) concerned with the preservation of cosmic and social order", and as post-axial, those "centrally (but not solely) concerned with the quest for salvation or liberation".¹⁴¹ Hick's first type reflects the primal worldview which sees oneself as part of the whole of encountered reality known as cosmos. Tillich affirms this through the sacramental type, but in terms of the revealing character of the divine through the manifold objects and functions of nature. Hick's second type emphasizes individual consciousness that

¹⁴⁰J.B. Cobb, "Order Out of Chaos" in J. Kellenberger (ed.), *Inter-religious Models and Criteria*, New York: St. Martin's, 1993, pp.77-82.

¹⁴¹John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, p.22.

uses its freedom to attain its destiny, depending on how destiny is understood: whether in the world or beyond it. Tillich's mystical and ethical types do take into account the personal state of humans to transcend themselves to attain their essential being, but he goes further to correlate the analysis of the human situation with the two-fold nature of the holy.

To conclude, Tillich's typology is not an attempt on his part to show Christianity as the only or best religion in its expression of the three typological elements in perfect or adequate ways. Rather his typology is a useful tool for the analysis of the religious phenomena of various traditions, and Christianity is used only as an example to show the possibility of typological elements coming together. The typology has elaborated the relation between religion and religions, which we also addressed in the last chapter, in more concrete terms. How religion becomes demonized or profanized has been seen again, following the same definitions we saw in Chapter I. The typology witnesses to a pluralism because divine revelation is affirmed as *common* to all religions, and *difference* in the manifestations and expressions is explained in terms of the predominance of either the holy as present or the holy as ought-to-be. The fact of the *difference* between the ontological and the moral types is true not only between religions but also within a religion¹⁴² makes Tillich's pluralism more radical (affirming the validity of *many* concrete actualizations) on the one hand, and shows the possibility of the polar types being complementary rather than confrontational on the other hand.

¹⁴²Tillich, *DF*, p.57 (italics added).

PART B

THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

The object of systematic theology is religion as ultimate concern. But since the content of religion is found in the various manifestations of ultimate concern, Tillich's ideas in respect of a "theology of culture" (which for him involved viewing ultimate concern from its expressions in history and at the same time judging the manifestations from the standpoint of ultimate concern) were appreciated in Chapter I. We discussed in Chapter II Tillich's typology of religions, which he developed by a systematic analysis of the-holy-and-its-manifestation (or the *holy as such* and the *holy as known*) correlation, while at the same time showing that the typology is verifiable in the actual life of the concrete religions. The dynamics of the three important elements of religion, namely the sacramental, the mystical and the ethical, revealed Tillich's typology as a useful analytical tool *to interpret* particular religious forms, and *to dialogue* with the religions.

Now we move on to discuss Tillich's "theology of religions".¹ Brief statements on the scope of theology of religions as assumed in this study and the use of the terms "pluralist" and "pluralistic" at this point would be helpful. The theology of religions

¹It is more common now to find the designation "theology of religions" rather than the earlier one, "theology of religion". The older term is used for example by Panikkar, who believes in the "religious vitality of mankind" expressing itself in various forms, including secular forms (R. Panikkar, "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion: A Critical Self-Examination", *Harvard Theological Review*, 66 (1973), p.31). Panikkar's choice, we might observe, is determined by the "*religion* manifesting itself in the *religions*" idea that we see in Tillich. Panikkar states: "The *ultimate* religious *fact* does not lie in the realm of doctrine or even of individual self-consciousness and therefore it can - and well may - be present everywhere and in every religion...." (*ibid.*, p.115) Any one who is sceptical about any common basis for the religions and hence who pays more attention to the details of concrete religions will go for the current designation, "theology of religions". In Tillich's case the expressions are equally important because each corresponds to the respective side of the religion-religions dialectic. The religion side is essential, for without it there can be no manifestation. The religions side is important, for that is the mode of our experience and reflection.

involves at least three things. First, the broad basis for including various religious complexes within a single subject matter, "religion", is important, for it is necessary to distinguish what religion *is* from what religion addresses or takes on as its *medium* of expression. This was done under "The Concept of Religion". Second, it assumes that though theology reflects on the different understandings of reality and experiences with which it is acquainted, its theological categories have limitations in comprehending the phenomena of other religions fully. This involves the somewhat paradoxical claim that though theology is a reflective framework defined by a particular historical religion it can still have relevance for other religions. To what extent Tillich's theological method and system reflect awareness of such limitations as well as provide some basis for critically incorporating valuable insights of different religions in an interreligious context will be discussed in Part C. The third feature of theology of religions has to do with the question of the *mutual relationship* between the religions. This involves exposing the arbitrary way of claiming truth-value for one's own religion and denying it to other religions. Any claim of mutuality of religions without the acknowledgment of common criteria also lacks credibility. Assessing how far the criteria for truth-value are valid in the light of one's own religious tradition in particular and of other religions in general is an important task of theology of religions. Whether evaluations of the above criteria should be made from one's own religion or in the light of insights from various religions is a debated question in the theology of religions. Hence it is being asked whether one should only think in terms of a 'Christian theology of religions' or whether one can anticipate a 'universal theology of religions'. These issues will be addressed in this part, Part B.

The two terms "pluralistic" and "pluralist" as used in this study need to be distinguished one from the other. "Pluralistic" stands for "manifoldness" or "diversity" that characterizes a particular religious concept or position. It can refer to a concept that has been shaped by insights from different sources and traditions, or it can refer

to a theological endeavour that is committed to this task. "Pluralist" or "pluralism" stands for a definite theology of religions position in contrast to absolutism, relativism and universalism, although the exponents of the pluralist paradigm see the mutuality of the religions in more than one way.

In Chapter III we discuss Tillich's criticism of broad approaches which view the relation between Christianity and other religions in absolutist, relativist or universalist terms. This will be followed by identifying the important theological concepts that Tillich uses while discussing Christianity's relationship with other religions. It will be seen that these concepts are also the main criteria or resources within a religious tradition that determine the contents of the respective systematic theologies. So the task is to see if these criteria point towards a pluralism. This will be done in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

CRITIQUE OF SOME MAJOR APPROACHES

Tillich sketched his theology of religions in a rather tentative manner, by distinguishing his position from two extreme positions. He identified himself with a mediating position, although at times found himself moving between two distinct approaches within this mediating position. Bringing together Tillich's brief criticisms of these positions by appreciating their internal demands (as "dictated" by the particular theologian's premises) and external demands (either trends of the milieu or partial knowledge of other religions) will introduce us to the problems that he seeks to overcome in his own theology of religions. This critical survey will show Tillich's position as falling beyond all the three main approaches, namely "absolutism", "relativism" and "universalism", although the last of the three is quite an open approach and which for Tillich includes those classical attempts to bridge the truth of faith and the truths of reason, to bridge Christianity and other religions, and to bridge absolutism and relativism.

In this chapter Tillich's critique of approaches, mainly limited to the Christian ones, will be presented under some classificatory terms that Tillich uses, in relation both to Christian theological models and to interreligious models. So the sub-sections deal with the three main approaches that he rejected, namely, 'absolutism', 'relativism' and 'universalism'. This compares quite closely with the now widely-used classification in the theology of religions: exclusivism, relativism and inclusivism. The other approach in the classification² is pluralism, and since it is being argued in this study as a position that Tillich subscribes to, it will be dealt with in Chapter IV. Discussing the arguments against the criticized positions, while appreciating some genuine concerns behind the formulations of the positions themselves, will prepare for discussion of the

²See pp. 2-3, n. 8.

pluralist character of the central theological concepts of Tillich's theology. The three positions are not simply negative such that they only help identify the distinctive character of Tillich's theology of religions, but they have positive aspects in their claims that are necessary for a pluralist stance.

The three positions show Tillich's dialectical method at work, the same method that he employs to understand human realities (personal, social and political), time-space relationships and reality as a whole. Stating that the "present attitude of Christianity to the world religions is as indefinite as that in most of its history", Tillich goes on to identify the main theology-of-religions positions of his time:

The extreme contrast between men like Barth and the theologian of missions, Kraemer, on the one side, and Troeltsch and the philosophical historian, Toynbee, with his program of a synthesis of the world religions, on the other, is symbolic for the intrinsic dialectics of the relation of Christianity to the religions proper.³

He believes that in most of its history Christianity maintained an open, universalist approach to other religions, and shows this was the case by a very brief historical sketch.⁴ But he contradicts himself, when he says: "There was...always a majority of theologians and church people who interpreted Christianity in a particularistic and absolutistic way."⁵ Neither numbers subscribing to an approach nor the length of time it has been held will settle the validity of that approach. So it is profitable to focus on Tillich's attempt to spell out the extreme positions indicated in the dialectic mentioned above and to point out the third position which *includes* the important elements of the two polar positions. Thus absolutism and relativism at opposing poles and universalism as the position that transcends both will be discussed.

1. Absolutism

³Tillich, *CEWR*, p.46.

⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.27-51 (esp. p.30), p.53.

⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.44.

As a theology-of-religions position that he rejects, Tillich's discussion of the absolutist or "the orthodox-exclusive" model is brief,⁶ although he brings out various aspects of this position when addressing different theological issues. While he does see value in some of the insights of absolutism, he is consistent in disclaiming it as a viable theology of religions position. He states in his last public lecture that he is against "reject[ing] all religions other than that of which he is a theologian"⁷ and against the rejection of the significance of the history of religions for systematic theology "in the name of a new or of an old absolutism".⁸ Our presentation of Tillich's critical evaluation of absolutism might be done in terms of his reason-revelation dialectic, for absolutism is nothing but an affirmation of one side, or an aspect of one side, of the dialectic.

The main features of the now familiar "theology from above" and their philosophical sources have been identified by Tillich in different connections. And in regard to the question of Christianity's relationship to the different religions, his reference to two otherwise opposed thinkers as representing absolutism might be interesting. He sees the 'absoluteness' idea in Hegel and Barth, and points out that both suggest those religions as "dead" which have been transcended by Christianity.⁹ Hegel, starting from a rational basis, sees Christianity as the highest and final form of the movement of the World-Spirit making the earlier forms redundant or dead, while Barth starting from a revelational approach sees 'the revelation of God in Christ (not Christianity in general) alone as "revelation", all other faiths being regarded "religions", which are nothing more than "futile human attempt[s] to reach God".¹⁰ The absolutism of both thinkers arises from using the ultimate as the sole criterion of truth and interpretation of reality, although the manifestation and operations of the

⁶Tillich, *FR*, p.83; Tillich, *CEWR*, p.44-46.

⁷Tillich, *FR*, p.80

⁸Tillich, *FR*, p.82.

⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.56-57.

¹⁰Tillich, *FR*, p.80.

ultimate are differently understood. The closeness of Hegel and Barth in the absolutist claim that they make for Christianity should not blind us to the fact that the two thinkers stand as representatives for one of the sides of the reason-revelation dialectic. So whereas Hegel's claim is that Christianity is the most rational religion, Barth's claim is that revelation is present only in Christianity.

The flaw with Hegel's "one-directed dialectics", for Tillich, is that it is a dialectic which takes no further account of "what is dialectically left behind".¹¹ This is not to say that the old is lost, for elsewhere Tillich commends Hegel for his attempt to draw the old into the new by negating and preserving (*aufgehoben*) the old.¹² Religion, for Hegel, has undergone a three-stage development in history. It has evolved from the first stage of the religion of nature (Chinese religion being the example), passed through the second stage of the religion of individual spirituality (Indian religion), and finally reached the stage of absolute religion (Christianity).

It is the Christian religion which is the perfect religion, the religion which represents the Being of Spirit in a realized form... In it.. the infinite Spirit and the finite spirit are inseparably connected; it is their absolute identity which constitutes this religion and is its substance or content.¹³

Tillich presents two ways by which Hegel comes to affirm the absoluteness of Christianity: first, by a philosophical interpretation of the history of religions by employing the "evolutionary-progressivistic scheme",¹⁴ and second by his claim that everything is rational, the rational structure having been actualized in the self-realization of the divine.¹⁵ The self-realization of the Spirit in turn meant the actualization of reason in humans and the universe. "There cannot be a Divine Reason

¹¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.56. Tillich notes Hegel's "optimistic tendency" in raising *affirmation* above the unity of affirmation and negation. (Tillich, *PTTB*, p.47)

¹²Tillich, *ST III*, p.366.

¹³G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol.II, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1895, p.330. Quoted in Lloyd Geering, *Faith's New Age: A Perspective on Contemporary Religious Change*, London: Collins, 1980, p.107.

¹⁴Tillich, *ST III*, p.358.

¹⁵Tillich, *ST II*, p.24. Hence Hegel is seen as deifying reason. (Tillich, *ST I*, p.82.)

and a human, there cannot be a Divine Spirit and a human, which are *absolutely different*. Human reason ... is the divine in man...."¹⁶

Tillich criticizes both the progressivistic idea of Hegel and the latter's attempt at deifying reason. The first of these, the idea of progress in religion, is untenable as seen from three of Tillich's related analytical concepts. First, the substance-form correlation, where religion is substance, witnesses to the fact that religion cannot be evaluated from a ground other than itself, for it is the ground of every meaning. In other words, religion affirms that being-itself cannot be subject to any valuation. Second, in Tillich's typology of religion we saw religion present in the sacramental and the higher types. Though the types have distinctive features, the underlying character of religion seen in terms of the two-fold nature of the holy, the holy as being and the holy as ought-to-be, is common. Even in the case of the concrete embodiments of religion, approximating to one of the ideal types, Tillich has shown that there is no steady progress. This is the case because religion, in its concrete form, fails to attend equally to both aspects of the holy. Hence the gain in one direction means a loss in another. And third, as we shall see later (Chapter IV under "Christ the Criterion"), the concept of the "centre" of history resists the idea of the meaning of history being given at the end of history, all the earlier stages being regarded merely as developing stages. For Tillich the meaning of history is at the centre and thereby has the power to judge and direct history.

Hegel's deifying of reason violates Tillich's theological view that knowledge is historical and hence cannot express absolute truth. The knowing individual cannot become identical with the universal knowing subject. This fact had been overlooked by the Medieval theologians, who did not deify reason as Hegel did but redeemed it

¹⁶G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol.I, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1895, p.33. Quoted in Lloyd Geering, *Faith's New Age*, p.103.

through revelation and claimed for it the ability to have knowledge of God and reality from an absolute standpoint, possible only for the Christian:

The knowledge of nature is open to the non-Christian as well. The knowledge of super-nature is possible only through revelation. Whoever is not reached by it, stands quite outside the truth, a heretic or heathen. But whoever is illuminated by it, finds in this very fact the historical fate which links him to all others of the same destiny. Revelation eliminates individualization in thought and gives every single person an absolute position.¹⁷

Such an absolute position was made questionable by Protestantism with its assertion that super-nature too as it relates to humans is not free from the tensions to which historical thinking is subject - the sphere of knowledge too reflects the human "consciousness of standing in separation from the Unconditioned". This should also be one of the reasons for the ambiguity of theology, a fate that theology shares with all other enterprises of the human mind.¹⁸

But, Tillich only questions the possibility of the absolute position within the realm of knowledge. The 'absolute position' idea *in a special sense* is essential at the point where knowledge is related to the Unconditioned, and hence "the expression of a basic metaphysical attitude". The statement or truth that is uttered at this point is free from relativity or ambiguity, and can only be about the true character of the relationship between the Unconditioned and the conditioned. "It is the judgment that constitutes truth as truth."

The absolute standpoint is therefore a position which can never be taken; rather it is the guard which protects the Unconditioned, averting the encroachment of a conditioned point of view on the sphere of the Unconditioned.¹⁹

Tillich's further descriptions of this absolute standpoint as that which is "an indication and defense at the same time" of the Unconditioned, shows the absolute position in relation to knowledge as the counterpart of the Protestant principle in relation to

¹⁷Tillich, *IH*, p.133. See *ibid.*, pp.129-175.

¹⁸Tillich, *ST II*, p.16.

¹⁹Tillich, *IH*, p.171.

theology. A consequence of this absolute position is that it affirms a "beliefful relativism", which is a relativism that overcomes relativism. That is, a theory that acknowledges the element of fate (limitations) in being and relativity in knowledge in virtue of the fact of knowledge involving decision (which makes knowledge historically conditioned) cannot accord itself the status of final truth. The absolute or guardian standpoint would check such a claim.²⁰ In other words, the observation of the relativity of statements about reality cannot be made into an all-embracing theory about the nature of knowledge, for knowledge falls within the Unconditioned, although in the human existential state knowledge does not express fully its *logos* structure. Tillich's criticism is that, in addition to relativism's self-contradiction in making an absolute statement about the "knowledge of knowledge" (*logos* or rational structure of reality which is present in everyday knowledge) from an observation about the relativity of all knowledge, the absolute standpoint *does* and *must* resist in the name of being-itself.

The absolute standpoint is not absolutistic as in Hegel, for Hegel in his *hybris* knows the outcome of the Absolute Spirit's self-manifestation in all reality, including its coming to self-consciousness in humans - the negative not being a continuous threat to the positive.²¹ Whereas for Hegel finite reality is in the last analysis only the sphere in which the Absolute Spirit actualizes itself, for Tillich the *logos* structure is present in humans, society and history in all their variety. The affirmation of this structure is possible because it is affirmed at the most fundamental level, that is, in being-itself. God is not the infinite opposed to the finite as in Hegel. The negative character of "*in-finite*" suggests "the dynamic and free self-transcendence of finite being". "Infinity", here, "is a directing concept, not a constituting concept. It directs the mind to experience its own unlimited potentialities, but it does not establish the existence of an

²⁰Tillich, *IH*, pp.170-172.

²¹Tillich, *Perspectives*, pp.115-128,130-133.

infinite being."²² So God is not on one side of a relation or polarity but is the *structure* that upholds all relations and dynamics.

Being-itself is not infinity; it is that which lies beyond the polarity of finitude and infinite self-transcendence. Being-itself manifests itself to finite being in the infinite drive of the finite beyond itself. But being-itself cannot be identified with infinity, that is, with the negation of finitude. It precedes the finite, and it precedes the infinite negation of the finite.²³

Therefore, the logos, or the rational, structure is meaningful, and the absolute standpoint is essential for judging the nature of the finite. This point is crucial for theology and theological criticism.

But this absolute standpoint cannot be identified with any given tradition. Tillich points out that an "absolutism of tradition" was claimed by "orthodox and clerical ecclesiasticism" when it sought "to maintain itself in all its ancient forms with reference to the eternal" in the face of secularism's threat.²⁴ He criticizes this form of absolutism because it absolutizes the "static element" of reason by ignoring the "dynamic element".²⁵ Thus the church can sometimes regard itself as "something absolute which does not have to die but which maintains an exclusive structure and validity".²⁶ And Tillich points out how fanaticism could be characteristic of those who seek wider knowledge but are not prepared to see themselves in a new or different light (the dynamic element of reason). Coming as they are "from the security of tightly bounded thinking and belief", despite their reaching the "frontier of other thinking and belief", their realization of "what they themselves are like in the mirror of the other", and their experience of the potential to rise above their present understanding, they "fall back on old certainties" and

²²Tillich, *ST I*, p.190.

²³Tillich, *ST I*, p.191.

²⁴Tillich, *RS*, pp.158-159.

²⁵Tillich, *ST I*, pp.86-87.

²⁶Tillich, *UC*, p.136.

affirm them fanatically with the aim of eliminating the frontiers which they cannot cross over, of bringing all spiritual possibilities into subjection to their own, of dissolving them in their own identity.²⁷

Tillich is equally critical of the "absolutism of revolution", which is the dynamic element's reaction against the static element in actual reason. But once a revolution attains victory, it establishes itself as the unchangeable truth. It fails to see the relativity of its truth. Tillich finds Protestant orthodox absolutism guilty of making an absolute norm of the theological stand it took while revolting, and commends Schleiermacher for recognizing this mistake and declaring, "the Reformation continues".²⁸ Though Tillich's criticism of certain revolutionary movements including that of Protestantism is valid, he wrongly calls the crystallizing of a revolutionary slogan "absolutism of revolution". He fails to see that even a revolution can become a living tradition beside the tradition it opposes (Protestantism for instance) and that only in some rare cases a revolution replaces the prevailing tradition (Communism in the former Russia, and Islam replacing Eastern Christianity in the seventh century).²⁹ Tillich blunders here by identifying the dynamic element of reason with a particular movement rather than with reason's ability to question its present boundaries. So we argue that even if a slogan of revolution has manifested itself in a particular context only for a short time, it should be considered "absolutism of tradition". In fact Tillich himself elsewhere acknowledges that Protestantism became more orthodox than Catholicism within fifty years of its existence.³⁰ What "absolutism of revolution" actually should refer to is the tendency to revolt against any given form or system, a tendency which is valid and positive if not raised to absoluteness.

²⁷Tillich, *FR*, p.54. Tillich points out that the term 'fanatic' has changed from its original meaning of one who is "divinely inspired" to one who is "demoniacally inspired". (*ibid.*)

²⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.87 and p.87 n.8.

²⁹See Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.18,37.

³⁰Tillich, *UC*, p.65.

Absolutism of tradition and absolutism of revolution are instances of narrow uses of reason for self-preservation of tradition against change or for bringing in a new social or political order. Absolutism of both kinds are unsympathetic and insensitive to either tradition or revolution. Often rational criteria or cultural forms are used to claim absoluteness or superiority for one's tradition. Tillich notes that "great religions" other than Christianity, in contrast to the "primitive" ones, also sometimes claim absoluteness for themselves on the basis of their *cultural* maturity and sophistication.³¹ Though these absolutist claims do not appear to be made on religious grounds (namely, in the name of revelation), Tillich's religion-culture correlation, which sees cultural maturation and theological maturation mutually influencing each other, can detect *Advaita Vedanta's* typical absolutist theology of religions. *Advaita* preaches that all human constructs of ultimate reality disappear when one attains the highest level of consciousness, which is also the state of identity with *Brahman*. This is evident in Radhakrishnan's claim: "The worshippers of the Absolute are the highest in rank, second to them are the worshippers of the personal God, then would follow the "worshippers of incarnation like Rama, Krishna, Buddha" and after these the still lower forms."³² The basis of Radhakrishnan's claim for *advaita's* superiority is his view that personality is a limiting concept for the ultimate.³³ What Radhakrishnan fails to recognize here is that even *advaita's* conception of the Absolute is a human construct. We shall see later that Tillich's concept of "God beyond God" seeks to identify the common character of the different conceptions of the ultimate.

We have above considered the absolutisms based on absolutizations of reason. When we came to the absolutist theology of religions of the *Advaitic* religio-

³¹Tillich, *ST* III, p.358.

³²S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, New York: Allen & Unwin and Macmillan, 1927, p.32.

³³S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, New York: Allen & Unwin and Macmillan, 1929, Vol. I, p.97.

philosophical tradition, we already touched the religious side very strongly though not in terms of revelation. Now we move on to discuss Tillich's rejection of absolutisms based on revelation.

Two ways in which Tillich sees revelation absolutized, leading to an absolutist theology of religions, might be identified. Both of these, which will be seen to be related, may be found in Tillich's criticisms of Barth. The absolutization of revelation in one way is expressed in the context of Barth confronting the liberalism and the progressivism of the time and Nazism. And Tillich regards Barth as the main force in the European Protestant resistance to Hitler.³⁴ Barth's theological orthodoxy, which in the given political situation had revolutionary and strategic power to unite Christians against Hitler, was powerful because of the clear-cut way in which Barth presented God's revelation and salvation as totally opposed to human achievements and self-salvation and opposed to human means to various superiorities (cultural, racial). To challenge secularism and fascism, an absolutism of a "supernatural" kind seems to be needed to attack absolutisms of a finite kind. Did Tillich think that Barth practised one form of idolatry to fight another form of idolatry, that he used a new parochial ideology to counter the dangerous parochial propaganda of Nazism? Tillich would certainly not see the Barthian approach and Nazism as idolatry of the same order. Barth's criticism was certainly an expression of divine judgment on the situation. But this vertical judgment becomes idolatry at the point a particular form of religion is raised to ultimacy. It is idolatry when an exclusive claim is made for a religion, that it alone is the witness to the divine by divine right and authority. So, though Barth's absolutism had the *critical power* to lead Protestantism out of its "sectarian seclusion" and to challenge secularism at a crucial time, it lacked *creative power* to cooperate with worthwhile cultural movements when the crisis was over, as

³⁴Tillich, *UC*, p.63.

Tillich points out.³⁵ The idolatry of Nazism in contrast has no divine basis; it turns a finite into the ultimate.

The second form of Barth's absolutism is expressed in his opposition to the concept "religion" and in his rejection of all approaches to the divine except the Christian. According to Barth, Christianity is not really religion; rather it is a witness to God's own act of revealing Godself in Christ. Again, his absolutization of revelation is evident, and is the basis of his claim that it could be said apriori that Hinduism is unbelief, even before meeting a single Hindu.³⁶ Tillich's charge against this approach, like that against fundamentalism, is that it overlooks the part played by the receptive side in the revelatory situation and consequently identifies "one individual and conditioned form of receiving the divine with the divine itself".³⁷ While Tillich considers Barth failing to distinguish the revealing and receiving aspects in the revelatory situation, Barth's basic theological affirmation lies in stating God's absolute power to make Godself known and to effect the reception of the revelation in the believer, as the believer approaches in faith. Barth would not distinguish between revelation and reception because that would give the believer a part in the understanding of the revelation, which part according to him can only be a distortion of the revelation. But this undermining of the reception side, in Tillich's view, is the source of "mechanistic-supranatural theories of revelation and inspiration". These theories must be rejected because on the one hand God is permitted to interfere with natural processes to reveal Godself, thereby destroying both reason and the structure of being.

A supranaturalistic theology which employs patterns derived from the structure of possession and sorcery for the sake of describing the nature of

³⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.207.

³⁶Cited in Colin Grant, "The Threat and Prospect in Religious Pluralism", *The Ecumenical Review*, 41 (1989), p.50.

³⁷Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.4.

revelation in terms of the destruction of the subjective as well as of objective reason is certainly intolerable.³⁸

On the other hand such an understanding of revelation does not take account of "the dynamics of the history of revelation", which recognizes revelation in concrete terms: first, the universal phenomenon of universal revelation, as we saw in sacramental religion; then as the "reception" of this revelation in its distorted form and its "rejection" by mystical religion; in the case of the ethical religion of the Old Testament there was the exercise of "reception, rejection and transformation" in relation to universal revelation; and finally comes final revelation, which though is the criterion of every revelation needs the earlier forms as preliminary revelation.³⁹

In Tillich's understanding of revelation, therefore, reason has an important role. This is why Spiritual creativity cannot be restricted to the biblical passages, because those same passages bear the cultural creativity of people of earlier contexts.⁴⁰ Literal acceptance of earlier formulations, which is theological literalism, and advancing of those formulations without reference to present experience are opposed to a proper revelation-reason correlation, even though certain concepts or symbols like God, revelation and salvation have been common to most periods of history. The absolutism of revelation is evident in the claim that the Bible is a document of revelation and hence has authority. Tillich shows the dangers of biblical literalism in respect of a worthwhile systematic theology.⁴¹ The role reason or conceptualization plays in the use of biblical images or symbols (especially, the Christological symbols) is overlooked by biblical literalism.⁴² Once the bible is accorded authority, it reinforces the absolutization of the revelation in Christ, and

³⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.117.

³⁹Tillich, *ST I*, pp.139-143.

⁴⁰Tillich, *ST III*, pp.209-210. Keith Ward protests against the role of reason when he questions the idea that "once one believes God has really revealed something, one is bound to believe it on simple authority". (Keith Ward, *Divine Action*, Collins, 1990, p.230)

⁴¹Robert W. Schrader, *The Nature of Theological Argument: A Study of Paul Tillich*, Missoula (Montana): Scholars Press, 1975, pp.23-8.

⁴²Tillich, *ST II*, p.139.

consequently claims revelation as applicable only to Jesus Christ. (Tillich rejects this "exclusive Christocentrism"⁴³) It is in terms of this revelation-combined-with-authority approach that Christian exclusivists reject all other religions and their claims to truth and salvation. Tillich's response to them is not in terms of an empiricist argument that other religions too can make (or do make) claims of revelation and of the revelation(s) documented in their Scriptures. This kind of argument would only expose the contradiction in claiming the revelation in one's own tradition valid but denying validity to revelation in other religions. Adopting a systematic approach, Tillich focuses on the *character of the holy itself which is that of revealing itself* by being present in every reality and experience. Hence revelation is universal, and applies to both the concrete religious realm and the secular realm.

It is the failure to see the mutual relationship between reason and revelation that an absolutism based on one of them arises. Tillich criticizes dialectical theology for not being truly dialectical - which has been echoed recently by Küng.⁴⁴ Barth's two-fold failure lies in using his "No" against liberal Christianity and strangling its relative, scientific criticism, and in not saying a "No" to his own orthodox "form of doctrine".⁴⁵ The criticism of Tillich that would apply to Barth in this respect might particularly concern Christology. The *concreteness* of the Christ is sacrificed if the expressions relating to the final revelation are taken literally. For Tillich, "none of these expressions of the experience of the final revelation is final and absolute in itself. They are all conditioned, relative, open to change and additions."⁴⁶ This would then mean that no theoretical or practical aspects of the picture of the Christ is valid in itself or has direct absolute consequence for us.

The final revelation does not give us absolute ethics, absolute doctrines, or an absolute ideal of personal or communal life. It gives us examples which

⁴³Tillich, *ST* III, p.5.

⁴⁴Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, p.233.

⁴⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.208.

⁴⁶Tillich, *ST* I, p.151.

point to that which is absolute; but the examples are not absolute in themselves.⁴⁷

We might add to this that Barth's over-emphasis on God's act, especially in revealing Godself, led him to narrow God's *agency* of revelation to the Christian religion: "The divine fact of the name of Jesus Christ confirms what no other fact does or can confirm: the creation and election of this religion to be *the one and only true religion*."⁴⁸

The question might be raised whether the significant similarities between Tillich and Barth, especially in respect of their descriptions of God and revelation, would justify Tillich's criticism of Barth. For instance, Barth's categorization of God as "Sovereign" and "Absolute" and Tillich's categorization of the same as "the Unconditional" and "Absolute" are almost identical. Also, Tillich's claim that God *gives* and *reveals Godself* which humans have to first receive before they can make any worthwhile affirmation or do any worthy act is not much different from Barth's statement that God *offers* (salvation) and humans only *receive* it. Both men reject ways of self-salvation. But the difference between them, and which is crucial, is in Barth's narrowing of revelation to Christ alone in contrast to Tillich's openness in acknowledging *an element of faith* both in mystical striving for union with the infinite and in "personal encounter with the personal God". "Faith", for Tillich, "is the state of being grasped by the power of being-itself",⁴⁹ and hence is present in various

⁴⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.151. See also p.152.

⁴⁸Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.1/2, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956, p.356. (Italics added) It might be noted that Barth uses 'religion' as a designation for the Christian tradition and community, departing from his opposition to the concept of 'religion', which was also echoed by Kraemer: religions are "in their ultimate and essential meaning and significance, *erroneous*". (H. Kreamer, *Why Christianity of All Religions?*, Lutterworth, 1962, p.95,n.1) However, Barth would want to insist that what the community is constituted by and what the community should bear witness to is radically different from the bases on which other religious traditions rest. That is, revelation itself "singles out the Church as the *locus* of true religion". A genuine response to this revelation is at the same time the reception of the "grace of God, which, of course, differentiates our religion, the Christian, from all others as the true religion". (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol.1/2, pp.298,327)

⁴⁹Tillich, *CTB*, p.167.

revelatory situations, central to the respective religions. In other words, whereas Barth concentrated God's action in Christ with a view to drawing all religious and secular loyalties to Christ, Tillich recognized God's revelation as a universal phenomenon and demanded every form of religion to be in continuous correlation with its revelatory event in order to be genuine. So instead of denying revelation in religions other than Christianity, he saw the distortion in the revelation-reception correlation as the cause of the corruption of religion: "*Falsa religio* is not identical with special historical religions but with the self-saving attempts in every religion, even in Christianity."⁵⁰

We have seen that the failure to see revelation as expressed through symbols leads to an absolutization of one particular conception of God and of God's relationship with the world. This is, for Tillich, idolatry because no symbol can express the divine fully. Faiths other than Christianity which fall under any of one of the mystical, prophetic or sacramental types are seen by Tillich to be guilty of absolutism too: "Every type of faith has the tendency to elevate its concrete symbols to absolute validity."⁵¹ Idolatry of this kind, where the reception side of revelation is overlooked, makes Tillich see little difference between orthodoxy and fundamentalism.⁵² And Tillich's indictment of fundamentalism must be pointed out here, showing that it is an absolutism that denies reason any part in revelation:

Fundamentalism has demonic traits. It destroys the humble honesty of the search for truth, it splits the conscience of its thoughtful adherents, and it makes them fanatical because they are forced to suppress elements of truth of which they are dimly aware.⁵³

It is the fundamentalist attitude that Tillich attacks when a religious group *totally rejects* another group's religion due to the former group's fundamental assertions

⁵⁰Tillich, *ST II*, p.86.

⁵¹Tillich, *DF*, p.97.

⁵²See Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.4.

⁵³Tillich, *ST I*, p.3.

(usually claimed to be revealed) being contradicted by the latter group's beliefs. We might refer to Jesudasan who gives a good example for this by suggesting that early Christian exclusivism was a result of the reactionary response to Jewish exclusivism.⁵⁴ The example of Islam's encounter with Christianity following the former's emergence in the seventh century is given by Tillich to show the exclusivism on both sides - a defense always having the effect of narrowing down.⁵⁵ Tillich points out that even if the fundamentalist possesses the "civil right" of affirming views special to the group and rejecting views of other groups such a rejection cannot be theologically justified.⁵⁶ Tillich's attempt in this connection is to point to an open, universalist approach in the periods leading to the making of early Christianity, and thereby to show the 'unpopularity' of the exclusivist approach. A proper theological argument against exclusivism, however, should be one which derives from Tillich's idea that each religion is born out of its respective revelatory situation. Each genuine religion in which the revelation-religion (which is the same as revelation-reception) correlation is true demands that it be taken seriously and not rejected outrightly.

A final question here in this section is, whether Tillich's absolutisms of reason and of revelation can include the complex nature of the fundamentalisms of the Islamic nature and of the Hindu-Muslim confrontations in the Indian context? Whereas Christian fundamentalisms stress one or more of the following, Christ as the only revelation, the inerrancy of the Bible and conservatism in doctrine and sometimes family and social values of sorts - all of which are usually defended on the basis of a decisive revelation, the fundamentalisms in the Islamic world and in India are considered to be responses or reactions to historical factors. Rajashekar points out that in the case of Islam today, exclusiveness is a way of claiming identity after

⁵⁴Jesudasan, *A Gandhian Theology of Liberation*, p.136.

⁵⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.38.

⁵⁶Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.28-30.

centuries of colonial subjugation.⁵⁷ Islamic identity is worked towards by emphasizing the importance of the *umma* (the world-wide Islamic community), and initiating cultural revolutions to bring about equality and justice and other human values.⁵⁸ We can point out here that although the reason for the exclusiveness is different from an affirmation of revelation, when the the Muslim fundamentalists are questioned about their basis for claiming that their version of justice or other values - unopen to any change - are the right ones, they are bound to answer that revelation is their basis. The recent Indian situation is entirely different in that religions have been politicized, and with a mistaken understanding that every religion has its own specific culture (although in reality India does share a common cultural heritage and experience) communalism is on the rise. And Samartha fears that such communalism is not far from the demand for a nation-state based on religious identity.⁵⁹ Tillich's analysis that applies to this situation is the danger of demonization in religion, namely that of absolutizing a particular culture as constituting religion, rather than recognizing the dynamic character of the religion-culture correlation. Thus Tillich's theological concepts can to a large extent be regarded as adequate for analyzing various absolutisms.

Tillich's criticisms of absolutisms based on reason or revelation have been critically examined so as to make clear Tillich's explicit and implicit disfavour with an absolutist theology of religions. His most succinct statement on this shows the *concrete* character of the revelatory situation, which provides the *concrete, particular* symbols for the corresponding theology to develop into a theological system. It would be arrogance to make one such revelatory situation and the theology based on it the basis of the many others: "The victory of *one* religion would impose a particular

⁵⁷J.P. Rajashekar, "Islamic Fundamentalism: Reviewing a Stereotype", p.69.

⁵⁸J.P. Rajashekar, "Islamic Fundamentalism: Reviewing a Stereotype", pp.65,67-70.

⁵⁹S. J. Samartha, *One Christ - Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, pp.50-57.

religious answer on all other particular answers."⁶⁰ Now we move on to discuss the other extreme theology of religions position that Tillich rejects but whose reactions to absolutism he takes seriously.

ii. Relativism

The idea that polar elements are related in a dialectic, which is central not only to Tillich's religious typology but also to his inquiry into the structure of reality, is found in his identification of positions in the theology of religions. He sees absolutism and relativism as polar positions, the former claiming a certain definiteness in respect of the nature of the reality in question and the latter rejecting such a claim on the basis that the nature of a particular reality varies with the facts available about it any given point. Thus, for instance, a static ethical absolutism that is incapable of adapting to changing situations leads necessarily to "the rise of ethical libertinism and relativism".⁶¹ Relativism is a protest against absolutism, when absolutism fails to face new situations or faces it with an unchangeable answer. Absolutism, for its part, criticizes relativism when the latter makes a norm of varied conceptions of reality and applies them even to the fundamental *structure* of reality, thereby in effect questioning the very fact of that structure (which for Tillich is the ontological structure with being-itself as the *ground*) This dialectical relation between absolutism and relativism must be looked into more closely to appreciate Tillich's criticism of the relativist theology of religions.

The tension between relativism and absolutism is seen by Tillich in the very character of faith itself. Faith demands that we seek to become what we *essentially* are by reaching for the ultimate, despite our finitude which limits such an attempt.

⁶⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, p.96. cf. Samartha: "Exclusiveness regards universality as the extension of its own particularity and seeks to conquer other faiths. (Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow" in John Hick and Paul Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, London: SCM, 1988, p.79.

⁶¹Tillich, *PE*, p.156.

Out of this tension the problem of faith and tolerance arises. A tolerance bound to relativism, to an attitude in which nothing ultimate is asked for, is negative and without content. It is doomed to swing toward its own opposite, an intolerant absolutism. Faith must unite the tolerance based on its relativity with the certainty based on the ultimacy of its concern.⁶²

Here it is plain that Tillich does see relative elements in human life and thought as arising from human finitude but at the same time criticizes relativisms which explain human life purely in terms of the preliminary concerns and not in terms of the ultimate concern of humans. For Tillich the relativist theory based on preliminary concerns is not possible given his understanding that ultimate concern is universal and some preliminary concern becomes a person's ultimate concern.

Tillich's criticism of relativism may also be seen in terms of his general criticism of empirical philosophy. Individual things are seen as standing *alongside* each other, with "no immediate approach to" and "no direct participation in other individuals and in the universal power of being". Although there is a view of "reality as a whole" in empirical philosophy, the relationship of one part of reality with another is more a matter of the actual interactions between the two rather than any influence by the *power* of being that is common to them. In terms of Tillich's ontological analysis this philosophy is built on the principle of "individualization" alone without the principle of "participation".⁶³ This idea is also expressed in the more general transcendence-immanence language: "...positivism does not see the problem of self-transcendence. It restricts itself to the immanence, not because of the unapproachable mystery of the transcendent, but because of its unwillingness to trespass the limits of the empirically given."⁶⁴

One consequence of a denial of participation or transcendence, which is significant for the theology of religions, is a denial of "common ground" among

⁶²Tillich, *DF*, p.57. See also *ibid.*, p.56.

⁶³Tillich, *BRSUR*, pp.17-18.

⁶⁴Tillich, *PE*, p.77.

cultures for understanding experience or reality. Tillich criticizes "much naive relativism in popular thought" and ethical relativism in particular, which argue for the absence of "common ground", and points out that their error lies in the comparison of parts of one culture with corresponding parts of another. Such a comparison is untenable, especially since the appearance of "the insight that a living reality like culture is a structural unity, a *Gestalt*, and not a mechanical composite". Tillich's suggestion is that a study of cultures as wholes will lead to the recognition of a "common fundamental principle" behind the differently expressed ethical or other demands in the various cultures.⁶⁵ Such a principle is evident in the basic human predicament of the separation of one's existential being from one's essential being.

In all the varieties of cultures and religions and, consequently, of ethical systems, some basic norms appear. They are rooted in man's essential nature and ultimately in the structure of being itself.⁶⁶

The differences in the demands and norms proposed by each culture to overcome the existential estrangement are due to each culture's attempts relative to the existing social, psychological and political conditions. Tillich thus sees a union of the absolute and relative elements, the former suggesting the universal validity of the basic norms and the latter the fact of their varied manifestation in the concrete situation.⁶⁷

The structure of being underlying the realities experienced and expressed differently is an idea that will be strongly criticized by epistemologies of empiricists and relativists. If reality is defined, as it is by Page, as "some particular form that understanding happens to take" and if the particular forms are conditioned on the one hand by the concepts shared by the group and on the other hand by "inadequate formation" or "inappropriate application",⁶⁸ then only the relative element is present.

⁶⁵Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, London & Glasgow: Collins - The Fontana Library, 1974, pp.26-27.

⁶⁶Tillich, *MB*, p.28.

⁶⁷Tillich, *MB*, p.29.

⁶⁸Ruth Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God*, London: SCM, 1985, pp.52-62 (esp. p.61).

There is no unity or truth from which one has fallen such that one has now to return to, or move towards, it. Also there is no "absolute justification" for any choice one makes.⁶⁹ This criticism of the absolute reality, truth or standpoint does not affect Tillich's ontological approach because he shares a two-fold concern with the relativist approach and in fact has a different understanding of the absolute element of reality. Tillich, too, believes that the ultimate or being-itself cannot be an unrelated absolute being whose nature or function can be known apart from the concrete forms, which according to him are judged with "yes" and "no" by the ultimate itself (as we saw under "Religion and Culture"). The second point of agreement is a consequence of the first. Ambiguity surrounds both the forms themselves and the understanding of the forms. Tillich's consistent understanding of the ultimate as having both being and non-being makes the ultimate dynamic, not a fixed being or reality. So there is no definiteness about its working or its appearance. Consequently, there can be no absolute knowledge about it. However, Tillich makes one absolute statement about the ultimate: that being always overcomes non-being in the ultimate and hence the ultimate is the source of the *power to be* for all other beings. As the ultimate is immanent in all beings, beings and forms are immanent in each other. This suggests mutual correction and appreciation of the complementarity of forms, which together lead to the creation of new forms. The *presence* of the ultimate and the *creation* of new forms are consistent with the two basic qualities of the holy, namely the holy as being and the holy as ought-to-be. Tillich's approach is arguably more adequate, because whereas relativists by and large see reality and meaning as dependent on the creative act of the individual or group, Tillich's proposal allows one to *participate* in the forms and be related to all other forms through the ultimate that is immanent in them and at the same time to *create* new forms.

⁶⁹Ruth Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God*, pp.58-59.

Nevertheless, a relativism of the above kind is helpful in identifying the "theory-ladenness" or more precisely the "interest-ladenness" of Tillich's ontology. The fundamental ontological structure constituted by self and world and the ontological elements such as individualization and participation are intended to serve as the basis for developing a theological system. If one articulates the concepts of the Christian faith, which is only one of many faiths, what is the guarantee that such concepts can be true for expressions of religion in other traditions? Tillich is aware of this problem, that one's presuppositions determine one's system, and hence admits the relative character of his system:

Ontology and theology establish a relatively but not absolutely static a priori, overcoming the alternatives of absolutism and relativism which threaten to destroy both of them.⁷⁰

This understanding of Tillich's position regarding relativism should help us appreciate his criticisms against a relativist theology of religions, which criticisms are usually in the form of short statements without any argument. He refers to historical expressions of relativism, and the validity of relativist objections in certain contexts and their self-defeating character in other contexts. Tillich's remarks in respect of Troeltsch's contribution is significant in this connection. He recognizes Troeltsch as an important figure who at the beginning of this century pointed out that historical studies of the religions required that one look at the material and sources of a particular religion from its own criteria of truth. No criteria of truth or hermeneutical tools were to be taken from outwith it. Troeltsch's relativism was seen as developing in the light of the dominant positivism of the time which demanded "acceptance of the empirically given without a superior criterion".⁷¹ Tillich points out that Troeltsch abandoned his claim of Christian superiority ("Christianity as the most adequate realization of that concept" of religion) after recognizing that such a claim was only

⁷⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.167.

⁷¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.44.

possible because the criterion used to compare the religions was in the first instance derived from the Christian-humanist tradition. Troeltsch also stated that an interpretation of history is not governed by any universal aim.⁷² And with regard to the theological question of the universal significance of Christ, he stated boldly that Christ is the sole criterion for the experience and knowledge of God for Christians only.⁷³

A study of the non-Christian religions convinced me more and more that their naive claims to absolute validity are also genuinely such. I found Buddhism and Brahminism especially to be really humane and spiritual religions, capable of appealing in precisely the same way to the inner certitude and devotion of their followers....⁷⁴

The relativist idea of affirming the truth of one religion in its own right is put succinctly by Foerster:

It is easy for a religious relativist (like myself) to accept without hesitation the validity, and hence the (relative!) truth, of any other religious faith (because it doesn't conflict with mine).⁷⁵

Tillich has no quarrel with relativism for affirming that all historical religious complexes are valid in their own right, because in his view each religion has its own revelatory situation and unique cultural forms which determine the expression of the respective revelation. In so far as the revelation is true in a tradition, for which there can be no proof outside the revelatory correlation (for example, Tillich points out that a Protestant cannot verify if there is revelation for a Catholic through Mary⁷⁶), that tradition is true. That is, divine manifestation is universal. Whether or not Foerster would take this as the basis of affirming the validity of the various religions, he joins Tillich in the validation. But whereas Foerster would see no common ground between

⁷²Tillich, *CEWR*, p.43.

⁷³Ernst Troeltsch, "The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions", in Baron R. Hugel (ed.), *Christian Thought: Its History and Applications*, New York: Meridian Books, 1957, p.26.

⁷⁴Ernst Troeltsch, "The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions", p.52.

⁷⁵John Foerster, "Paul Tillich and Inter-religious Dialogue", *Modern Theology*, 7:1 (October 1990), p.2.

⁷⁶See Tillich, *ST I*, p.128.

the religions to find conflict or similarity (perhaps due to factors such as differences in historical experiences or struggles and differences in the conceptions of self, world and the ultimate), Tillich has the Protestant principle (which will be discussed in the next chapter) to judge the various religious forms in each tradition after taking into account interpretations given by the followers of the respective traditions. The same point is made by Tillich in connection with his statement about the manifestations of the Kingdom of God in history. The Christ as the "centre of history" in its position as "both criterion and source of the saving power in history" *judges* all manifestations. And Tillich states that in this idea of the "centre of history" there is the implicit criticism of relativism.⁷⁷

The source of this Christological criticism of relativism may be found in Tillich's idea of the absolute substance expressing itself in many cultural forms.⁷⁸ Absolute substance is not something unrelated to experiential realities; nor does it arbitrarily choose and express itself in forms. If absolute substance is affirmed violating the Tillichian principles which we have discussed under "Religion and Culture", then a relativist criticism against it will be valid. The criticism may be either that only a *formal* possibility of an absolute substance is asserted or that something *concrete* has been elevated to universality. But both these are already answered by Tillich's positive premise that the absolute is present in every concrete reality, which is the basis for Tillich's claim that in the depth of every living religion there is recognition of the meaning and spiritual significance of other religions and worldviews.⁷⁹ This premise stated in negative terms will answer the second relativist criticism more directly: the absolute is never presented in an absolute manifestation.

⁷⁷Tillich, *ST* III, p.389. The idea of the "centre of history" will be discussed under 'Christ the Criterion'.

⁷⁸An example in ethical terms is the unconditional command (of love) breaking through all concrete commands. (Tillich, *PE*, p.155)

⁷⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.97. This point will be elaborated in Chapter VI under "A Dialogical Approach".

This should also be true in the case of the Christ, although Tillich's statements about the Christ appear to be otherwise. (Tillich's consistency in this regard will be one of the main concerns in the two Christological sections of the next chapter.) So in principle one of the concrete manifestations cannot elevate itself to an absolute status - because to do so would be heteronomy.

A positive valuation of relativism is made by Tillich only in so far as it resists absolutism, which is incapable of adapting itself to a radically changed historical situation. But relativism goes to the other extreme of asserting "change itself as the ultimate principle".⁸⁰ Although this observation is made in relation to ethics, it would apply to religion regarded as a cultural entity. Relativism's emphasis on the changing conditions would lead to religion being considered merely "an effect of changing psychological and sociological conditions" and not "a *necessary aspect* of man's spiritual life".⁸¹ Hence relativism would simply endorse each relative form in the name of change. Not a full affirmation but a qualified affirmation of the relative form would be in order because the absolute is immanent in every form. Unlike absolutism, which restricts the absolute to particular forms, relativism is open and implicitly affirms, according to Tillich, the presence of the absolute in all forms. But relativism does not have a criterion to separate the more true from the less true qualitatively, although a quantitative differentiation is possible. The principles that relativism adopts to judge the relative forms

do not represent principles comprehensive enough to embrace all periods and creative enough to bring new embodiments of themselves. They are not eternal enough to be ultimate principles and not temporal enough to fit a changing world.⁸²

⁸⁰Tillich, *PE*, p.154; see also *ibid.*, pp.153,155.

⁸¹See Tillich, *TC*, p.3. (Italics added)

⁸²Tillich, *PE*, p.154. The same criticism "that there is no way of distinguishing the more from the less true" in relativism has been made even recently (Edward J. Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology for the World*, London: S.C.M., 1986, p.168).

Is not Tillich's criticism too strong here, failing to see more qualified forms of relativism? Rupp points out that no "unqualified cultural or religious relativism" is possible in the face of mutual influences brought about by history which is moving towards a "single world culture".⁸³ As a consequence of concrete religious interactions and through developing more complex conceptual models, relativists too make positive contributions to discussions in the theology of religions. Tillich cannot take this effort lightly for it falls in line with his claim of the absolute's immanence in many forms, which suggests the possibility of the development of higher forms.

The one important difference, however, between the relativist approach and Tillich's in this respect is that whereas relativism proposes development of more adequate forms in a relative-relative correlation, Tillich stresses the fundamental character of a universal-relative correlation and its presence in every relative-relative encounter. The process Tillich suggests finally leads to a new actualization of the universal-relative relation. But the question is, why should Tillich object to relativism's suggestion of a relative-relative approach which aims to resist the hierarchy and hence the tyranny of an absolute? Tillich's likely fear is that this relativist approach would result either in the subjective conquering the other or in the surrender of the subjective to the other. The absolute or the unconditional, which is not "reached under logical or methodological guarantees" but reached in a daring act of faith, an act that penetrates to the transcendent ground of one's being, is the only solution.

But what is "really real" among all the things and events that offer themselves as reality? That which resists me so that I cannot pretend its not-being. The really real is what limits me. There are two powers in the whole of our experience which do not admit any attempt to remove them, the unconditional and "the other" i.e., the other human being. They are united in

⁸³George Rupp, "Religious Pluralism in the theology of an Emerging World Culture", *Harvard Theological Review*, 66 (1973), p.208. There are other inadequate forms of relativism, such as the Indian example of the blind men and their encounter with parts of the elephant, suggesting that each one's view of truth is conditioned by his experience, and the idea that ultimately none of the loyalties to the respective religions is valid (W.C. Smith, *Faith of Other Men*, p.13).

their resistance against me, in their manifestation as the really real. The unconditional could be an illusion if it did not appear through the unconditional demand of the other person to acknowledge him as a person. And, conversely, "the other," if he did not demand an unconditional acknowledgment of his personal dignity, could be used as a tool for my purposes; as a consequence he would lose his power of resistance and his ultimate reality. The unity of the personal and the unconditional, or of the ethical and the religious, is the manifestation of the really real, for it resists absolutely any attempt to be dissolved into subjectivity.... Protestant formative power must grasp reality in its unconditional and irresistible seriousness and must not build on a place before or beyond the really real.⁸⁴

It is precisely the resistance of relativism to any idea of a universal structure of being that makes Tillich suspicious of relativism as a candidate for a viable theology of religions. Without the idea of the unconditional, any attempt to regard some statements of other religions as true and others false is unacceptable, because religion demands the unconditional.⁸⁵ In Tillich's view, preliminary concerns that fail to recognize the unconditional lose themselves. In the same way concrete religions can lose themselves or be rejected if the element of ultimacy is lacking. And yet, Tillich consistently claimed that those who work from the side of culture or the secular are in some way directed by the religious substance that their creations bear. This means that Tillich must recognize the contribution of relativists to the theology of religions. Our suggestion is that Tillich can accept them under the umbrella of a "relativist universalism" (which we shall discuss in the next section). In addition, the relativists' claim of finding or developing complex or inclusive models does suggest a mutual immanence of models in the case of religions rather than the alongsidedness of models.

As extreme models absolutism and relativism, with their emphasis either on religious substance or on form and with their tendencies towards demonization and profanization respectively, cannot stand as viable theology-of-religions positions. They can however unite in a higher perspective, "universalism".

⁸⁴Tillich, *PE*, pp.215-6.

⁸⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.29-30.

3. Universalism

Due to the dialectical tension that exists between the two extreme positions discussed above, it is possible to anticipate a third in which the concerns of the two polar positions would be met. This position is designated "universalism",⁸⁶ despite its similarity with the now current "inclusivism", because the former is the one used by Tillich. Two distinct forms of universalism can be identified in Tillich's sketchy historical analysis of the Christian attitude towards other religions. We may call the first, which acknowledges revelation and salvation as universal and offered through various religions but in only one religion their offer is definitive, *absolutist universalism*. The second, which professes that what is universally valid in religion is relative to each particular expression, is here designated *relativist universalism*. After appreciating the merits of each type, we shall suggest that Tillich's type of pluralism, which may be called "dialectical pluralism", is informed by these two types.

Absolutist universalism is here suggested as an approach which believes in an absolute principle which is universally valid or a divine absolute which is the universal reference point for life and truth. Usually it is claimed that this truth is more adequately experienced and expressed in one's own religion than in those of others. The promise to Abraham, "In thee all nations of the earth shall be blessed", exhibits such a universal idea but gives a special place to the descendants of Abraham.⁸⁷ In Chapter II we saw that Tillich grants a special place to religion reaching a special stage historically (at least in the history of Israel) in the Jewish prophets' elevating of justice to a principle that was valid for and common to both the Jews and the

⁸⁶Hans Kung sees universalism as a position between "exclusive particularism" and "relativistic indifferentism" similar to the classification here (Hans Kung, "The Freedom of Religions" in Owen C. Thomas (ed), *Attitudes Towards Other Religions*, London: SCM, 1969, p.216).

⁸⁷Tillich, *UC*, p.112.

neighbouring nations. This meant on the one hand that "Jahweh has superior power because he is the God of justice", and on the other hand that Jahweh's covenant with the people of Israel now had a special criterion, namely justice. Thus the universal element in the understanding of God is reached, and in the light of this element Tillich corrects the misunderstanding that "exclusive monotheism" is particularistic:

The exclusive monotheism of the prophetic religion is not due to the absoluteness of one particular god as against others, but it is the universal validity of justice which produces the exclusive monotheism of the God of justice. This, of course, implies that justice is a principle which transcends every particular religion and makes the exclusiveness of any particular religion conditional.⁸⁸

Tillich shows that the universal principle of justice is transformed by Jesus into the still wider universal concept of *agape*, "which is the substance of every moral law", in the picture of the ultimate judgment in which the Christ welcomes people who have acted righteously from all nations.⁸⁹

Christianity inherited the universal principle of justice from Judaism; it also drew inspiration from a certain universality witnessed to by the Romans and from a universal concept of Greek philosophy. Tillich suggests "universalism" as the special situation into which Christianity was born, and hence an inheritor of that spirit. The Roman Empire had broken down national religions and cultures and even histories so as to give rise to the idea of "world history".⁹⁰ Through "the most universal of all concepts" used by the Greeks, namely the *logos* doctrine, early Christianity affirmed the Greek principle of universal divine self-manifestation, and at the same time made a distinction between other revelations as "preparatory" and the Christ-revelation as "the central appearance".⁹¹ Believing that the early Church's method consisted of a dialectic of universal revelation and the concrete Christ-revelation, Tillich suggests

⁸⁸Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.31-2.

⁸⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.32.

⁹⁰P. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, Carl E. Braaten (ed.), London: SCM, 1968, p.2.

⁹¹Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.33-4; see also *ibid.*, pp.35-7.

that early Christianity had a stronger universalism than the universalisms of later centuries.⁹² "Christian universalism was not syncretistic; it did not mix, but rather subjected whatever it received to an ultimate criterion."⁹³ We shall see under "Christ the Criterion" in the next chapter that Tillich's own approach is not much different from the early Church's. This would mean that Tillich's approach is after all an "absolutist universalism" just as the early Church's. The claim of this study, however, is that Tillich's approach is pluralist, because the theological criteria which underlie his theology and his theological method witness to a pluralism.

Tillich's interpretation of the early Church's universalism seems to be more an ideal picture than historically true. He sees the concrete aspect of the Christ and the universal aspect of divine manifestation *equally* emphasized in early Christianity, such that it can stand as his preferred model. The concreteness of the Christ is stressed showing how the quests of other religions converge in the central manifestation of the Christ, but at the same time maintaining the universal claim: "All that is true anywhere in the world belongs to us, the Christians".⁹⁴ The early Church's universalism was radical in that it saw the *logos* present in new revelatory experiences after its manifestation in Jesus under the guidance of the Spirit. The concrete and universal aspects enabled Christianity to be creative by understanding its experience in the light of insights from other religions and philosophies and at the same time to be communicating effectively to the public in terms of concepts that they were familiar with. And Arnold Toynbee suggests that Christianity emerged as the triumphant

⁹²Tillich, *UC*, pp.107-108.

⁹³Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.36-7.

⁹⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, p.35; see also *ibid.*, p.34. He states: "This astonishing universalism, however, was always *balanced* by a criterion which was never questioned, either by the orthodox or by the heretical groups: The image of Jesus as the Christ, as documented in the New, and prepared for in the Old Testament". (Tillich, *CEWR*, p.36) (*italics added*). See also Tillich, *UC*, p.95.

religion among the other religions of the Roman Empire precisely by absorbing what was valuable in those religions.⁹⁵

One point that Tillich fails to note with regard to the universalism of the early Church is that in the period following the appearance of the *logos* in Jesus the Christ, revelation and salvation were seen as possible only in terms of the Christ-related function of the Spirit. "Every new manifestation of the Spiritual Presence stands under the criterion of his manifestation in Jesus as the Christ."⁹⁶ Also, the early Church's universalism does not show itself open enough to explicitly acknowledge the lasting value of other religions. The other religions are regarded to be significant only in so far as they pointed or point to the *logos*'s manifestation as the Christ. In the light of this, it might be said that the early Church had given more prominence to the concrete aspect of the Christ than to the universal aspect. Hence the early Church's universalist stance as against a pluralist one. And because Tillich praises this approach of the early Church without qualification or criticism, he fails to express his pluralist stance.

The picture of the early Church is more varied than Tillich's presentation in the light of Maurice Wiles's observations. Wiles refers to negative attitudes in the early Christianity towards other forms of religion and life (even if the intent of the New Testament writers were not so), and also points out that Christian history has been syncretistic and Christian doctrine borrowed from the Hellenistic philosophico-religious tradition to the extent that the difference between orthodoxy and heresy was only the difference between *different ways* of bringing together the Christian and the Platonic elements.⁹⁷ This suggests that in addition to the predominance of the concrete criterion and of the universalist tendency, there were also mediate positions in the early Church, which sometimes distorted the one or the other. The concrete

⁹⁵Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity among the Religions of the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958, p.110.

⁹⁶Tillich, *ST* III, p.158.

⁹⁷Maurice Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue*, London: SCM, 1992, pp.7-17.

aspect of Christianity, as we saw earlier, became more determinative of the Christian attitude towards other religions (especially Islam) and heretical groups in later periods. The concreteness of the church as (one) bearer of the truth was confused with the truth itself. This can be seen as the source of the doctrine, "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*". The recent suggestion that "the church" in the above doctrine refers to the mystical body of Christ and not to the church as an institution in order to claim that the view is inclusive rather than exclusive, has been countered by Wiles, who points out that Cyprian originally used it as a warning against baptism given by heretical groups, as part of his admonition against schisms in the church.⁹⁸

Unlike this kind of universalism, where one particular tradition rises above the others by claiming to be the ultimate's definitive mode of expression, the next kind of universalism, which we shall now discuss, takes the concrete character of a religion or a cultural standpoint seriously and affirms that each in its own special way expresses the ultimate.

Relativist universalism may be used to represent the position that Tillich testifies as transcending "early Christian universalism, but without falling into relativism".⁹⁹ The concrete religion or standpoint is affirmed in stronger terms: hence the relativist element. It is nevertheless a universalism because the ultimate is affirmed as expressing itself in all religions but in different ways. What is important in relativist

⁹⁸Maurice Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue*, p.11. Origen is identified as having formulated the doctrine in the first instance, although Cyprian applied it first (Knitter, *No Other Name*, p.121). Hans Kung laments that though the Catholic Church no longer adheres to the dogma "outside the Church there is no Salvation", which had been affirmed in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and in the Council of Florence (1442), it had "never been corrected openly" (stated by Kung as late as 1990/91). (Hans Kung, "Dialogability and Steadfastness: On Two Complementary Virtues" in Werner Jeanrond & Jeniffer Rike (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.242.) We must point out that though Kung opposes an absolutism based on the Church, he himself subscribes to a form of particularistic universalism in accepting the contemporary Catholic distinction between the Christian ("ordinary") way of salvation and the other ("extraordinary") ways of salvation (Hans Kung, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, translated by Peter Heinegg, New York: Doubleday, 1988, p.232).

⁹⁹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.41.

universalism, as will be seen, is that experience and understanding within the *concrete religion* are regarded as the interpretative tools most useful for inquiry into the expressions of the ultimate as witnessed to in the respective traditions.

The breakthrough in Christian history from an absolutist universalism towards a relativist universalism is seen by Tillich to have taken place in Nicolas Cusanus. Referring to Cusanus's *De Pace Fidei* (The Peace between the Different Forms of Faith), Tillich quotes the divine *logos's* statement in the context of a colloquy taking place with representatives of different religions present:

There is only one religion, only one cult of all who are living according to the principles of Reason (the Logos-Reason), which underlies the different rites.... The cult of the gods everywhere witnesses to Divinity.... so in the heaven of (Logos-) Reason the concord of the religions was established.¹⁰⁰

Here the different religions are validated as true from a higher principle, namely Reason, which becomes the principle for judging the religions in the various expressions. This Reason criterion became influential in Erasmus and Zwingli, the latter "acknowledg[ing] the work of the Divine Spirit beyond the boundaries of the Christian Church". And the "leaders of the Enlightenment, Locke, Hume, and Kant, measured Christianity by its reasonableness and judged all other religions by the same criterion. They wanted to remain Christians, but on a universalist, all-inclusive basis".¹⁰¹ These Enlightenment thinkers, however, have claimed that the ultimate principle has been present in Christianity in a superior way.¹⁰²

What Tillich describes under "humanist relativism",¹⁰³ we argue, makes better sense as *relativist universalism*. The former designation portrays Christianity as "no

¹⁰⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.40-41. cf. Guru Nanak's statements made about 40 years after Cusanus, with his (Nanak's) literary knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian texts: "There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim" and also, "There is only One Being Who is the Creator and the uncaused Cause of all...God is one" (Stanley Wolpert, *India*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, p.105).

¹⁰¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.41.

¹⁰²Tillich, *CEWR*, p.42.

¹⁰³Tillich, *CEWR*, p.42; see also *ibid.*, pp.43-44.

more than the exemplar of the species religion", although some who take this approach claim superiority for their own traditions or approaches. Here Christianity is not considered to be different from other religions qualitatively. Hence the justification for it to be a relativism in Tillich's view. And it is a humanist form of relativism because the criteria used to compare the religions are the moral demand (Kant), reason (Hegel), mysticism (Fichte), feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher), and a combination of the mystical and ethical (Schelling). The moral, the rational, etc. being "forms" through which the absolute manifests itself, Tillich claims that any comparison based on any one of them (or even all of them together even if this is possible) must be relativist. The designation "relativism" may be appropriate if this approach is seen against the absolutist kind, which emphasizes the *absolute's* concrete manifestation but having universal significance because the absolute produces universal consequences. It may also be appropriate because it satisfies the general relativist principle that any standpoint from which reality, including religious reality, is looked at is conditioned, relative.

Contrary to this, we argue that Tillich should have called the approach of these philosophers *relativist universalism* in order to be consistent with his own understanding of religion. His conception of religion, along with his conception of art and philosophy, is such that the complexity that is evident in each of them is indicative of a certain wholeness of reality that does not allow a simple verification or falsification.¹⁰⁴ The religious reality is expressive in certain forms and latent in others. And in the negative cases, it is demonized in some forms and profanized in others. It is only in a concrete context that the revealing power of a particular form in expressing the ultimate can be determined. So forms such as moral or rational expressions are relative, and when used as criteria in relation to religion are relativist. However, what is presupposed in the use of these criteria is that similar or different

¹⁰⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, p.30.

expressions of reason, moral imperatives, etc. are present in the various religions. This presupposition of the universal validity of a criterion justifies the claim that the philosophers named above profess a universalism, but of a relativist kind. This is supported by Tillich's view that religion "as the self-transcendence of life in the dimension of spirit" is primarily not an independent function but is a quality of morality and culture (reason being one of the cultural functions), that is as the *depth* of morality and culture.¹⁰⁵

The assumption of this approach is that the criterion used as the ultimate principle is itself constituted by prior understandings relative to the culture, as Tillich himself points out. These relativist universalists, except for Hume, cannot be considered alongside pure relativists who do not recognize any relation between concrete religion and religion in a universal sense, between concrete meaning and universal meaning. The relativist universalists either state or imply that the meaning or truth experienced in one religion is present in other religions too, but in different ways. Those who operate from a concrete philosophical standpoint might not consider an experience within a religious tradition or an interaction with other religions important for their inquiry. This is a limitation that threatens this approach.

This two-fold character of universalism cannot be too rigid, for a position that falls mainly on one side can appreciate features of the other side. Its advantage over the inclusivist paradigm in the exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist scheme is that it gives more scope for differentiating positions and for providing a good analytical tool in the concrete-universal dialectic. It also helps to appreciate overlapping positions such as Hegel's, which we saw falling within the absolutist and the relativist-universalist positions. In a similar way, it is also useful to appreciate Indian approaches such as Gandhi's. An absolutist element in Gandhi was observed earlier. At the same time we have to take into account and represent Gandhi's claim to be a *sanatani* Hindu - a

¹⁰⁵Tillich, *ST III*, p.102.

universalist Hindu - on the basis of his practising a Hinduism that embraced what he found to be of value in the world religions and on the basis of addressing the same God common to all in his prayer.¹⁰⁶ A more dialectical attempt, like that of J.A.T. Robinson might fulfil the important concerns of absolutist universalism and relativist universalism. On the one hand Robinson affirms the need to express the character of God through the understanding of his own tradition, "God is Christ-like" or borrowing Chakkarai's designation "the Christhood of God", after the manner of an absolutist universalist; and on the other hand, he states that the truth of God is not confined to the Christ as a relativist universalist. However, one can note that his claim that "God is best defined by Christ" does limit his taking seriously the demands of the relativist side, although he is open to dialogue which should clarify, complete and correct his conviction.¹⁰⁷ Tillich also attempts to mediate the thrusts of the two approaches, working originally in terms of the dialectic of his Christian faith and the larger definition of religion as ultimate concern, and being informed by the insights of those who work from each of the two forms of universalism. This will be pursued in the next two chapters. But we shall close this chapter with an evaluation of the way Tillich sees the role of cultural developments within a religion in determining that religion's view of other religions.

Tillich's presentation of the universalist model overcomes the tendencies in the usual "fulfilment model" to claim superiority for Christianity either on the basis of grace expressed in Christ fulfilling the law of the Old Testament or on the basis of the perfection of the Christ that is passed on to those who follow him. Thus Nicol Macnicol (having appreciated the immensely rich ideas of life and even of God in Indian Theism, 1915) saw Hinduism as 'morally impotent', and suggested a similarity

¹⁰⁶Jesudasan, *A Gandhian Theology of Liberation*, p.132.

¹⁰⁷J.A.T. Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed*, London: SCM, 1979, p.129, and p.129, note 71.

between the idea of Christ fulfilling the Hebrew law and the idea of Christianity fulfilling Hinduism:

It [Hinduism] loads man with chains and leaves him helpless in deliverance. It has its lessons to teach us that can be carried over into Christian faith and can be linked with the tremendous moral energy that are stored there in the whole ethical tradition, culminating in the divine Fatherhood that is revealed in the life of Christ and the ethical passion that is revealed in the death of Christ.... Christianity has its springs of moral energy that Hinduism plainly has not.¹⁰⁸

Tillich would resist this approach, for he points out that the "state of ultimate concern admits no more of progress than of obsolescence or regression". It is the role of the particular individual or community concerned and of the use of cognitive and aesthetic forms in the reception of revelation that makes claims of progress in historical religions possible.¹⁰⁹ Although "the revelatory and saving manifestation of the Spiritual Presence is always what it is", there are differences in the concrete religions depending both on the potentialities present in an encounter with the holy and on human receptivity conditioned by concerns relevant to the specific historical context. But Tillich finds such cultural progress in religion not to be decisive for any religion to claim superiority over others: there can only be "the coexistence of different types without a universal claim". What is decisive for a universal claim is the revelatory event which conquers the demonic.

Christianity answers that this has happened on the basis of the prophetic type of religion in the event of Jesus as the Christ. According to Christianity this event is not the result of a progressive approximation, nor is it the actualization of another religious potentiality, but it is the uniting and judging fulfilment of all potentialities implied in the encounter with the holy.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Nicol Macnicol, "Christianity and Hinduism" in *Jerusalem Meeting Report*, 1, London: Oxford University Press, 1928, p.25.

¹⁰⁹Tillich, *ST III*, p.358.

¹¹⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.359.

Tillich makes explicit that the claim that Christ is the final revelation is valid because it represents a judgment in the vertical direction, despite the fact that the event in which it is manifested is unique.

It is not Christianity as a religion that is absolute but the event by which Christianity is created and judged to the same extent as any other religion, both affirmatively and negatively. This view of the history of religions - derived from the Christian claim that it is based on the final, victoriously antidemonic revelatory event - is not horizontal but vertical.¹¹¹

Tillich's statements concerning the Christ, especially that about the revelatory event of the Christ being the "criterion of all religions" because "in principle" the Christ has "broken the demonic for all time",¹¹² do appear to suggest an absolutist tendency, but we shall discuss them in terms of Tillich's critical phenomenological theory and his concepts of religious symbol and Protestant principle in the next chapter to appreciate their proper meaning. Here it suffices to state the two reasons for Tillich's emphasis on a special event which then becomes unique for a religion, as well as distinguishing factor between religions. The first is that every manifestation of the holy is concrete, and the second that prophetic religion affirms concreteness positively by virtue of its positive attitude towards history. Any affirmation of the Christ is an affirmation of these two points. This concreteness, as we shall soon see, is the existential side in revelation and in "Christ the Criterion"; the other side is the interpretative side, which involves the Christian theologian's expression of the Christ in universal terms. The separation of the two sides, despite the need to prove such a possibility, suggests that there is no absolutism - absolutism, which claims that that all revelations apart from Christ are excluded from divine revelation in principle.

A striking statement¹¹³ in the concluding part of *CEWR* shows that Tillich's theology of religions position, though not developed systematically, goes beyond the

¹¹¹Tillich, *ST III*, p.360.

¹¹²Tillich, *ST III*, p.360.

¹¹³Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.96-97.

positions we have discussed in this chapter. Now we will move on to probe his systematic theology and his theological method to draw out his general attitude to the theological and philosophical ideas of systems which are other than Christian. This will be done in the following two chapters in turn.

CHAPTER IV

CRITERIA OF THE PLURALIST PARADIGM

So far Tillich's general and formal way of characterizing the nature of religion, of the holy, of the revelatory situation and of each religion's concrete symbol were appreciated. From formal and abstracted conceptions and descriptions of the religious reality, we now move to discuss these formal criteria as found in a concrete religion, which in Tillich's case is Christianity. Universal religious criteria cannot be set up such that from then on they can have an independent criteriological function of their own. A pluralism that is affirmed on the basis of such independent criteria may cease to have much value in the event of the criteria becoming far removed from the actual developments a concrete religion is undergoing. We shall now examine the criteria identified by Tillich and see if they are common for both his systematic theology and his theology of religions. With the exceptions of *ERQR*, *CEWR*, and to some extent *UC*, there are no texts where Tillich addresses the theology of religions directly. And Tillich does not spell out and discuss the criteria for his theology of religions position in these in any systematic way. So we identify the central concepts of his systematic theology, which will also be seen to have significant implications for his theology of religions, and examine the mutual importance and consequences of the concepts for systematic theology and the theology of religions.

First, revelation will be discussed as a criterion that is common to both enquiries. Whether Tillich regards the revelation in Christ as the only revelation or whether he grants equal significance to each revelatory situation will be discussed. This will then lead to appreciating Tillich's understanding of God, who as being-itself is the one who manifests Godself. To what extent Tillich's conception of God takes account of the various concepts of the holy in the history of religion will be an important consideration in order that God may be claimed as the ground of religion

itself. This claim will then validate the plural expressions of God relative to the concrete cultural and historical context. This aspect of concreteness will lead us to identifying the third criterion relevant to the theology of religions approach in Tillich. This criterion is designated as "criterion" by Tillich himself, and also used by him to suggest the "concrete" experience within the Christian faith. Here the concrete Christian claim in regard to the revelation in the picture of Jesus as the Christ will be discussed to see if Tillich's elaborations are free of a Christ-superiority. And finally, the "Protestant principle" will be discussed in terms of the special functions it shares with or does for the larger concept of religion, the religious symbol and specially the symbol of the Christ. This would lead to identifying it as an important criterion for Tillich's theology of religions.

1. Revelation and Its Reception: "Biblical Religion"

Revelation is an important criterion for both religion and for theology, and hence it is the first part of Tillich's five-part *Systematic Theology*. It is of prime importance in any reflection of the nature of religion because revelation claims a transcendence of the subject-object structure, the structure that is the basis of knowledge encountered in daily living. The subject-object correlation, which is transcended, is however preserved in revelation. Hence revelation has actually two parts in it: divine disclosure or revelation and the reception of it by humans. "Biblical", in the expression "Biblical Religion", refers to the "revelation" which was received by the Jews and later by Christians (who did not negate the revelation received by the Jews, although they saw all revelation fulfilled in Jesus). And "religion" refers to the reception of that revelation. Together revelation and reception constitute a single religious and theological process.¹ We shall see here how through this "highly

¹"Biblical Religion" rather than "Christian Religion" is preferred in the title of his book *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* perhaps because the former is inclusive of both the revelation of the Old Testament and the revelation of the New

dialectical concept"² of biblical religion Tillich overcomes absolutisms based either on revelation or religion and relativisms based on religion.

Tillich's statement "that every religion is based on revelation and that every revelation expresses itself in a religion"³ expresses a formal theological principle common to all religions, including Christianity. Religion as a receiving function makes any claim of "revealed religion" impossible. Hence an absolutist approach is rejected. The correlation between what is revealed and its reception is important, for on the hand the ultimate's presence in every revelation is affirmed, and on the other hand the historical and cultural factors influencing every receiving religious group (or a special individual) is taken into account. The basis or context of both revelation and reception is the *revelatory situation*, in which the receiving party participates. This is what makes Tillich's understanding of revelation existential, in contrast to a nonexistential concept of revelation which suggests acceptance of a set of propositions about a past revelation,⁴ sometimes claimed to be "communicated in an extraordinary way" in the original instance.⁵ The acceptance of the supposedly revealed propositions is for Tillich either "an autonomous use of the intellect" or "a heteronomous subjection of the will", both of which are antithetical to a revelatory situation, because a revelatory situation is one in which the medium of revelation becomes transparent to its divine ground and manifests "the mystery of being for the cognitive function of human reason".⁶ Tillich makes a crucial point about the way the cognitive element is related

Testament. A further reason could be found in Tillich's general view that Christian doctrines over the centuries have become more and more narrow following more and more precise definitions. Tillich's interest is to see revelation in its historical and wider influence, rather than in the rational interpretations of faith, which are relative to the respective periods. Hence he chooses the earlier witnesses to revelation, the "Biblical".

²Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.5.

³Tillich, *ST III*, p.111.

⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.127. "There are no revealed doctrines, but there are revelatory events and situations which can be described in doctrinal terms." (*ibid.*, p.125)

⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.129,n.6.

⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.129.

to revelation. He rejects the idea of God's revelation being contained in certain propositions. He also rejects the claim of natural theology to discover truths about God from the side of the finite based on the doctrine of *analogia entis*. But he believes that *analogia entis* can be used in the sense of "religious symbol", that is, "using material taken from finite reality in order to give content to the cognitive function in revelation".⁷

The role of the revelation-reception correlation specific to each concrete religion is an affirmation of the unique character of each religion. Pluralism is affirmed by the fact of all religions being characterized by the revelation-reception correlation and by the fact of the uniqueness of the various religions being explained through the correlation. Tillich also acknowledges the fullness of the divine participation in revelation to make the disclosure side of revelation unambiguous. But, according to Tillich, the reception side, which shares in the existential conditions of humans and hence in its ambiguities, leads to inadequate and distorted experience of and expressions of the revelation.

In so far as religion is based on revelation it is unambiguous; in so far as it receives revelation it is ambiguous. This is true of all religions, even those which their followers call revealed religion.⁸

Although this statement accounts for the plurality of the religions on the basis of the differences in the reception aspect determined by history, culture and the receiving individual's vocation on behalf of her/his group, there seems to be a gulf between revelation and religion, which is even more evident in a statement Tillich makes elsewhere:

As religion, every religion is relative, for every religion objectifies the Unconditional. As revelation, however, every religion can be absolute, for revelation is the breakthrough of the Unconditional in its unconditionality.

⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p. 131.

⁸Tillich, *ST III*, p. 111.

Every religion is absolute to the degree that it is revelation, i.e., insofar as the Unconditional manifests itself within it as something unconditional, in contrast to everything relative that belongs to it as religion.⁹

The gulf between revelation and religion is not unbridgeable from the side of revelation, for Tillich's consistent insistence is that the absolute is present in the relative, the universal in the particular.

The mark of the Spiritual Presence is not lacking at any place or time. The divine spirit or God, present to man's spirit, breaks into all history in revelatory experiences which have both a saving and transforming character.¹⁰

But there is a Christian theological reason for the limitations from the side of religion as indicated earlier: Revelation is "received in a distorted form" because it "is received under the conditions of man's estranged character".¹¹ Tillich regards Kierkegaard's distinction between religiousness A and religiousness B crucial for the concept of revelation. Religiousness A basically affirms the presence of the divine in the finite, with Socrates as the model of revelation, revealing the truth that is *already in us*. In contrast to this immanentist idea, religiousness B emphasizes the separation between the divine and the human and hence the truth of "the principle of a revelatory communication from outside, which is both revelatory and saving or transforming". For Tillich both emphases are important, and so he sees them in a dialectic,¹² without subjecting the one to the other.

Here we come to a *point that is common* to Tillich's religious typology and his systematic theology. The fact that the 'immanence' idea and the 'transcendence' idea are two sides of the same coin is evident in Tillich's typology of religion: sacramental religion affirming the immanent approach and the mystical and ethical religions

⁹Tillich, *What is Religion*, pp.145-146.

¹⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.149.

¹¹Tillich, *FR*, p.81.

¹²Tillich, *Perspectives*, p.180.

representing the transcendent approach. Sacramental religion is universal because it affirms the presence of the divine in the sacramental object, which in turn points to the fact of divine presence in every being and every reality. The mystical and the ethical religions have the sacramental element in them, but exercise a purifying function to show that the divine transcends all finite forms when sacramental religion has allowed the finite forms to claim ultimacy for themselves. The immanence-transcendence dialectic is present in Tillich's systematic theology as the relation between revelation and religion or between the larger and narrower concepts of religion as the quotation which is to follow shows. The experience of religion through symbols and forms need to be continuously critiqued in the power of transcendence.

Religion as a historical reality uses cultural creations both in *theoria* and *praxis*. It uses some and rejects others, and in doing so it establishes a realm of religious culture which lies alongside the other cultural creations. But religion as the self-transcendence of life in all realms claims a superiority over them which is justified in so far as religion points to that which transcends all of them, but the claim to superiority becomes demonic when religion as a social and personal reality makes this claim for itself and the finite forms by which it points to the infinite.¹³

The superiority of the larger concept of religion, which is identical with revelation, that is reflected here is for Tillich applicable to all religions, and hence expresses his pluralist stance. Although transcendence is accorded superiority here, we must refer to Tillich's religious typology for his holding together of immanence and transcendence in proper tension. His interest in the typology is not so much that of classifying religions into types as that of showing the mutual immanence of the three elements on the one hand. At the same time concrete acts of mystical and prophetic transcendence should overcome the concrete distortions of sacramental religion. The prophets and the philosophers have their critical role against "the priestly guardians of the holy".¹⁴

¹³Tillich, *ST III*, p.111.

¹⁴Tillich, *FR*, p.47.

The transcendence aspect of revelation is given special treatment by Tillich in terms of the seemingly contradicting concepts of "mystery" and "revelation". Here the contrast between the claims of ethical and mystical religions is evident, although he does not indicate this.¹⁵ Mystery belongs to the very nature of the ultimate because the ultimate is that dimension of reality which precedes the subject-object structure. "Whatever is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed." This is an endorsement of the claim of mysticism. At the same time he makes the claim of revelation credible by stating: "Something more is known of the mystery after it has become manifest in revelation." Thus Tillich's religious typology is implicit here, and it is not difficult to show that unless mystical religion and prophetic religion accept in some way both the mystery and the manifestation aspects, there are the dangers of the former becoming demonic by its emphasis of the negative side of mystery and denial of the positive side of mystery which leads to "actual revelation",¹⁶ and of the latter becoming profane.

The reception side of revelation, which we pointed out as accounting for diversity, is significant because it recognizes the human and historical elements in revelation. Tillich's analysis of revelation through the *personal* model as against the earlier forms of understanding revelation from the side of God overpowering the individual as in sorcery, which overpowers physically, or in magic, which affects psychically, or in suggestive talk, which influences emotionally, is evidence of his taking the total human person seriously. God as person revealing to humans as persons is a special approach: "Revelation through the word respects man's freedom and his personal self-relatedness. Man is asked to listen, but he is left free to

¹⁵Tillich, *ST I*, pp.108-111. There is a quick reference to the mystic when he identifies the "abysmal element in the ground of being" with "the negative side of the mystery": "Without the "dark night of the soul," the mystic cannot experience the mystery of the ground." (*ibid.*, p.110)

¹⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.110.

decline."¹⁷ Failure on Barth's part to recognize the mutual relationship between the human and the divine - Barth fearing that any human element in revelation would make God partly dependent on humans - was for Tillich a failure to appreciate the reception side of revelation.

But although God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation.¹⁸

That various processes of revision and reconception of God take place in the revelatory situation is evident in this statement. This is clearer still in what he goes on to say:

The divine-human relation, and therefore God as well as man within this relation, changes with the stages of the history of revelation and with the stages of every personal development. There is a mutual interdependence between "God for us" and "we for God."¹⁹

The human element in the reception has already led to appreciating the historical element in the reception. But the important question is whether his understanding of the history of religions allows religions to be seen in their own right and not as part of a Christian interpretation. Tillich states his intention very clearly: "As human reception, biblical religion belongs to the whole of the history of religion."²⁰ He gives no special status to Christianity in principle. The revelation that Christianity received is not unrelated to the history of religion. This can be shown by referring to Tillich's idea that symbols are not a product of any history, for they belong to specific histories and enter into the revelatory situation of the religious group influenced by the respective symbol(s). Thus the symbol of "the annointed one" (*Christos* in Greek) or 'the Messiah' existed in Judaism and in Egypt before its

¹⁷Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.32.

¹⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.61.

¹⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.61.

²⁰Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.21.

distinctive use in Christianity.²¹ It is in Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, with the other disciples of Jesus following suit, that the symbol "the Christ" becomes normative for Christianity. The Christ symbol is thus related to the historical facts of the life and message of Jesus and the reality of the religious experience of the disciples which they expressed in terms of the Jewish idea of the Messiah.²² The reception aspect of revelation being concrete, Christianity was, at its inception, more than influenced by Judaism. For Tillich, as we shall see shortly and in greater detail under "Christ the Criterion", the Christ represents the vertical judgment on religion and culture. But in historical existence such a divine judgment or revelation has its reception or concrete side. Hence what is meant to reform Judaism (or to reach the "end of religion") leads to a new religion:

So the only thing we can say is that we agree with the New Testament message that the Christ is the end, namely the end of religion. On the other hand, we cannot deny that out of this end of religion a new religion arose, which is the Christian religion.²³

The original Christian revelation therefore was prepared for by Judaism. Without such preparation through the revelatory experiences in Judaism, the Christian revelation could not have been received.²⁴ There is no need to read the idea of Christianity surpassing Judaism into this account. For what is important here is the formal principle, valid for all religions, that the divine is *present* in all historical religions but at the same time *drives them beyond themselves*. Hence it can be said that Judaism itself is continuously striving to transcend itself. This is evident in the fact of revelation and the reception of it being ongoing, which is also testified by Tillich's

²¹Tillich, *UC*, pp.133-134.

²²Tillich, *UC*, p.134.

²³Tillich, *ERQR*, p.71.

²⁴Tillich, *ERQR*, p.73.

typology of religion. In criticisms directed against sacramental traditions, there is a "quest for new revelatory constellations".²⁵

The fact of history and historical events being significant due to the reception side of revelation should not lead to any authenticating of a particular history or of particular historical events on the basis of any supranatural agency. The transcendent character of revelation *prevents* the ultimate from entering history and creating a new course and *presents* the ultimate as the answer to the human quest for being and meaning.

Revelation is the manifestation of the depth of reason and the ground of being. It points to the mystery of existence and to our ultimate concern. It is independent of what science and history say about the conditions in which it appears; and it cannot make science and history dependent on itself.²⁶

Tillich admits historical and scientific analyses in so far as they help in identifying the superstitious and demonic elements in religion, but regards them as incapable of judging the revelatory situation.

It is by failing to appreciate the reception side of revelation in Tillich that Keith Ward calls Tillich a "theologian of inner experience", presents Tillich's idea of the revelatory event as "a sort of human experience", "a matter of infinite passion" and an experience of "primacy of relationship with God",²⁷ and points out that there is a lack of "an interactive relationship between God and a particular community" in revelation.

²⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.141.

²⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.117.

²⁷K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, p.231. For Tillich, although revelation usually grasps the group through an individual, it is significant only in relation to the group. (See Tillich, *ST I*, pp.111,147) Ward might also want to refer to Tillich's proposal of courage as the individual's way of overcoming the various forms of anxieties. (Tillich, *CTB*, p.152) But Ward is wrong because for Tillich theology is also very much concerned with relating love, power and justice as they appear in a particular context to the essential relationship between the three concerns. (Tillich, *LPJ*, pp.107-110)

But actually what Ward goes on to claim as the constituents of a revelatory process, which we quote, are all present with some qualifications in Tillich's understanding.

All aspects - objective Divine action and personal liberation (the aspect of empowerment), human experience of encounter and of union (the aspect of experience), reflective and imaginative interpretation (the aspect of propositional belief) - are involved in the revelatory process.²⁸

Ward's criticism of Tillich might be partly right if he has in mind Tillich's ontological understanding of the ultimate and its implications for the divine-human encounter. But we must point out that Tillich's use of the individual for analytical purposes, as in the discussion that follows, should not lead to the overlooking of the great importance Tillich accords to the community in connection with the reception element in revelation. Tillich accounts for God from within a basic disposition of the individual: "*Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.*"²⁹ The immediate awareness suggests a transcendence of the subject-object relation; there cannot be "the observed presence of one reality to another reality". *Intuition* is excluded from the awareness of God because God does not appear as a "*Gestalt*" or structure or *vision* (Thomas Aquinas) to be intuited but as an *element*, a *power* and a *demand*. And *knowledge* is rejected by Tillich because its separation of subject and object implies that the divine-human relation is "an isolated theoretical act". The precise statement of the awareness of God points to the close connection between revelation and salvation, which we shall now briefly consider.

The traditional understanding of revelation as having salvation as its content, which content being potentially effective but only actual when the recipient appropriates it, is challenged by Tillich. For him although revelation and salvation are

²⁸K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, pp.231-232. We have referred already to all that revelation involves for Tillich: transformation (empowerment), participation in the divine (experience), and doctrines relative to each revelatory situation (propositional belief).

²⁹Tillich, *TC*, p.23 (*italics in original*).

distinct, they are present in the same act. "Revelation can be received only in the presence of salvation, and salvation can occur only within a correlation of revelation."³⁰ The overcoming of self-estrangement, which is the actual condition of all humans, is recognized by all cultures, according to Tillich. But it is Christianity alone, which through its understanding of self-estrangement as "both curse and grace at the same time", has "a profound - the profoundest - feeling of self-estrangement among the great religions".³¹ On the basis of this adequate analysis of the human situation, Christianity also suggests the best way of dealing with self-estrangement, namely, that of overcoming it in reconciliation, in contrast to self-negation, which is advocated by the Indian religions.

Both his ontology and his theology demand a final victory for revelation such that the symbol of ultimate revelation becomes identical with ultimate salvation, the attainment of "complete transparency of everything for the divine to shine through".³² In suggesting this state, Tillich only states that the Christian message points to this possibility and does not claim that Christianity is the way to it. Since ontology by definition sees the ground of being, every being separated from it must also be reunited with it.

Fulfilment is universal. A limited fulfilment of separated individuals would not be fulfilment at all, not even for these individuals, for no person is separated from other persons and from the whole of reality in such a way that he could be saved apart from the salvation of everyone and everything.³³

From the above account it is possible to suggest that Tillich's understanding of revelation is *formal*, and has a *universal* basis, that is, it represents the views of Christianity, the prophetic religions and the mystical religions regarding the mode of

³⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.144.

³¹Paul Tillich, "Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought" in Gert Hummel (ed.), *Paul Tillich, Main Works 6: Theological Writings*, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter - Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmH, 1992, p.258.

³²Tillich, *ST I*, p.147.

³³Tillich, *ST I*, p.147.

receiving or experiencing truth. First, there is commonness in searching for ultimate meaning and in its reception:

Revelation answers questions which have been asked and always will be asked because they are "we ourselves." Being human means asking the questions of one's own being and living under the impact of the answers given to this question. And, conversely, being human means receiving answers to the question of one's own being and asking questions under the impact of the answers.³⁴

The fact of this experience taking place in all cultures suggests that biblical religion is one form among many similar forms. Second, the revelation-reception correlation, which applies to all religions, affirms that one's preparation would determine her/his response to revelation. Thus even the Christian way will be diverse (for example, the case of Paul addressing Christianized Jews who were legalistic and Christianized pagans who were libertarian), and no one form can in principle be above the other(s).³⁵ We saw Tillich reject any idea of a "pure revelation" as received without corruption by one religion and not by other religions, because no religion can escape the revelatory situation. Third, we have seen that typology of religion and the mystery and revelation elements in the concept of revelation validate each other.

Tillich's understanding of revelation witnesses to his pluralism. His approach has helped to affirm the history of religion adequately. But it is a critical pluralism (or dialectical pluralism, with affirmation and criticism, as we shall see later) in that which divine immanence in every revelation is acknowledged, the inadequacies and distortions that arise due to the reception element are subjected to criticism. Thus this affirmation of the universality and uniqueness of the revelations and criticism of the reception of each revelation together constitute an important criterion of Tillich's pluralism.

³⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.62.

³⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.33.

The revelatory situation, which we have just discussed, has pointed out that God is active in the revelatory situation, manifesting Godself to humans. With regard to knowledge of this revelation, God occupies the object side of the subject-object relation. But in Tillich's understanding, this "object" reference to God should not be done apart from seeing God as the very basis or ground of the subject-object structure itself. God is being-itself and not one of the encountered beings. Hence we discuss God as the ground of religion itself, not just of theistic religions alone.

2. The Ground of Religion³⁶: God

Implied and briefly addressed in discussing Tillich's broad, inclusive understanding of religion (Chapter I) and of "biblical religion" (section 1 above) was his understanding of God. The nature of God, the holy as present and the holy as ought-to-be, was directly addressed in the discussion of his religious typology. Now we must discuss his understanding of God in terms of his ontological framework, which Tillich believes is useful to express in universal terms the concrete understanding of God in Christianity. Whether this universal frame is useful to affirm and appreciate the *many* concrete conceptions of God or the holy will be discussed.

Tillich clearly states that the God-concept is *common* to both theology and the history of religions, and that it is also *fundamental* in each discipline. From the theological side, he says: "the idea of God is the foundation and the center of every theological thought".³⁷ Speaking on behalf of the history of religions, he says: the "idea of God" is "the basic element in the history of religion, simultaneously determining it and being determined by it".³⁸ To show that God is fundamental in spite of the diversity and ambiguities in the conception of God, Tillich coined the

³⁶"Religion" is used here not in the sense of the receiving of revelation but as representing the revelation-religion dynamic.

³⁷Tillich, *ST* II, p.5.

³⁸Tillich, *ST* I, p.218.

phrase, "God above the God of theism". The "God of theism" which is limited by human conceptions³⁹ actually points to God as Being-itself, according to Tillich. But how is one to be sure that it is to this Being-itself that every concrete conception refers?

This is argued by Tillich by pointing out that the language employed by any culture for the ultimate is symbolic language. The fact of the ultimate being universal and transcending every particular on the one hand, and being always present in and appealing to the individual or community through concrete concerns demanding transformation on the other hand, makes it impossible for God to be described purely in transcendent terms or purely in particular terms. A purely transcendent God would fail to create any human response, and a purely particular God cannot be the ultimate. Hence there is a need for a special language, which is provided by symbols. So God "is the subject of all the symbolic statements in which I express my ultimate concern."⁴⁰ And as ultimate concern is universal - one being seriously concerned from within a sacred or secular context - God is the basis of religion.

If God is understood as that which concerns man ultimately, early Buddhism has a concept of God just as certainly as does Vedanta Hinduism. And if God is understood as that which concerns man ultimately, moral or logical concepts of God are seen to be valid in so far as they express an ultimate concern.⁴¹

We have so far noted again and again Tillich's attempt to include various concepts of the ultimate under the overall concept of ultimate concern. But now we must justify how at least some of the various contents of ultimate concern are included in Tillich's understanding of God. This is required for our purpose of determining Tillich's pluralism, for a stronger case for pluralism can be made by showing the coherence of

³⁹Tillich, *UC*, p.51. Cf. Maurice Wiles: Though God is absolute, assertions about the nature of God cannot be absolute. Absolute assertions are idolatrous. (M. Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue*, London: SCM/Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992, p.35)

⁴⁰Tillich, *LJP*, p.109.

⁴¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.220.

the various conceptions of the ultimate. How far Tillich's understanding of God provides such a coherence will now be discussed.

The fundamental distinction in Tillich's concept of God which is the key to the many conceptions of God are the two-fold elements of *concreteness* and *ultimacy* in the doctrine of God. This is common to the systematic-theological study of Christianity and of the various religions. Most doctrines emphasize one or the other of the elements, and so are only partially valid. The two elements are implied in Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern: "whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is god for him".⁴² This definition shows the inseparability of the two elements of concreteness and ultimacy. But under the conditions of human existence, one of them can become predominant.

This relation oscillates between the concreteness of a give-and-take attitude, in which the divine beings easily become objects and tools for human purposes, and the absoluteness of a total surrender on the side of man....The Catholic system of relativities represents the concrete element most fully, while Protestant radicalism predominantly emphasizes the absolute element.⁴³

This differing emphases in the nature of the divine within the Christian tradition as observed above is also true of the religions of humankind.⁴⁴

This tension is found in the concrete descriptions of the gods in human and superhuman terms and as confined to time and space on the one hand, and in the ultimacy-emphasizing descriptions of the gods as immortals, as omnipresent and as omniscient on the other hand.⁴⁵ Tillich sees these two-fold elements even in magical religion: the concrete element is expressed in the intended effect on humans or nature, and the element of ultimacy is expressed in the claim of participation in the higher power. From a philosophical approach, since the question of God is basically related to the human question about being and meaning, it demands answers in both concrete

⁴²Tillich, *ST I*, p.211.

⁴³Tillich, *ST I*, pp.214-215.

⁴⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.215.

⁴⁵Tillich, *ST I*, pp.212-214.

terms and in universal terms. When one is in threat in a concrete situation, s/he sees it in the light of the universal threat to her/his being. And the answer that satisfies is one which is relevant to the concrete situation but which at the same time expresses its basis in the universal. This means that God's part in this existential experience of humans must be understood in both concrete and universal terms.

The term "being" means the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning, and the aim of existence. All this is threatened; it can be lost or saved. Man is ultimately concerned about his being and meaning. "To be or not to be" in *this* sense is a matter of ultimate, unconditional, total, and infinite concern. Man is infinitely concerned about the infinity to which he belongs, from which he is separated, and for which he is longing.⁴⁶

The concrete aspect of God as found in Christian theology and the religions can be explained in terms of some significant factors.

We have referred to Tillich saying that anything can become a medium of revelation in a revelatory situation. But for Tillich among the symbols for the ultimate that so arise, the understanding of God based on something that is human (or as we shall see later the human person as a whole) is more adequate. Tillich finds universal principles in humans (but variously valued by the cultures) that can be used in respect of God:

Man symbolizes that which is his ultimate concern in terms taken from his own being. From the subjective side of the polarities he takes - or more exactly, receives - the material with which he symbolizes the divine life. He sees the divine life as personal, dynamic, and free. He cannot see it in any other way, for God is man's ultimate concern, and therefore he stands in analogy to that which man himself is.⁴⁷

Perhaps the Christian insight that humans are made in the image of God lies behind Tillich's suggestion that the human in all its complexity is the key to an understanding of God. This point is evident also in the second part of Tillich's system which, entitled "Being and God", represents the fundamental principle that undergirds Tillich's

⁴⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.14.

⁴⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.243.

method of correlation: the question implied in being finds its answer in God.⁴⁸ So if God is the answer to the question of humans as a special kind of being, then an adequate doctrine of God should satisfy a proper understanding of the human, and conversely a proper understanding of the human cannot be developed independent of an understanding of God.

The *universal* element in God distinguishes God from every being. Tillich rejects the idea of God as the highest being, for it implies that God is *a* being among other beings. This is simply "wrong" and is "bad theology".⁴⁹ For Tillich, God or being-itself is not a

reality, alongside or above other things: that would only be a thing of a higher order which would again fall under the No. On the contrary, it is precisely through things that that reality is thrust upon us which is at one and the same time the No and the Yes to every thing. It is not a being, nor is it the substance or totality of beings; it is - to use a mystical formula - that which is above all things which at the same time is the absolute Nothing and the absolute Something.⁵⁰

This description of God suggests that God is fundamentally not available in a subject-object relation as other objects are. Elsewhere Tillich points out religious reactions against such objectification. Prophetic religion denies the possibility of seeing God, for prophetism regards sight as most active in objectification. Mysticism seeks to resist the objectifying tendency by insisting on an ecstatic union between the human and the divine.⁵¹

This unique position that God has in Tillich's ontology saves God from being exposed to any doubt about God's existence - speaking about "existence" in relation to God being absurd. Although God is real, God is not encountered directly but only through forms. The enquiring human being is already in a state of encounter with the

⁴⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.163.

⁴⁹Tillich, *CTB*, p.184; also *ibid.*, p.178.

⁵⁰Tillich, *PTTB*, pp.40-41.

⁵¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.172.

divine, for the divine is present in every reality, every form. In such a case, theology's task is that of identifying one's or a society's encounter with the divine and understanding the way that encounter is mediated through the various cultural acts. The divine is already in the equation, and hence "is not a problem but a presupposition. Its 'givenness' is more certain than that of anything else."⁵² Thus humans and God, who form the two sides of the knowing (and experiential) correlation, have an *a priori* status. This resists any attempt to raise the question of the existence of either the human self⁵³ or God. Nevertheless, the concept of ultimate concern is important even in a secular culture because it is integral to human existence. Pointing to the Enlightenment, Tillich suggests both the victory of cult and myth in that instance and the importance of cult and myth for "the revelatory experience on which every religion is based". As this experience needs self-expression to be ongoing, mythical and ritual elements have a role. And he shows that in actual fact they are present in even the most secularized forms of every religion or quasi-religion.⁵⁴

The many different experiences of the holy between religions and even within a religion are thus reduced to two main emphases. The one form understands ultimate reality as *transcending* everything finite, and the other form understands it as *the creative ground* of everything finite. The ultimate "is beyond what can be grasped by senses or words or thought, and it is at the same time the creative ground, present in everything."⁵⁵ This distinction which Tillich makes while discussing religious art and architecture, we might observe, corresponds to prophetic religion and sacramental

⁵²Tillich, *PE*, p.43.

⁵³Tillich suggests that the self is already in a state of self-relatedness, having a world and belonging to a world; "it is an original phenomenon which logically precedes all questions of existence".(Tillich, *ST I*, p.169)

⁵⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, p.93. In the case of totalitarian movements, myths were created out of ordinary concepts, events, and persons, and rituals were based on ordinary performances. (*ibid.*)

⁵⁵Tillich, *PTMW 2*, p.370.

religion respectively. Tillich does not refer to his religious typology here but identifies the former with Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the latter with Indian culture. We might note that Tillich is consistent here in his identification of the prophetic religions. But the sacramental-mystical synthesis he makes demands explanation. This synthesis holds in so far as the particular nature of the holy that is predominant in both is concerned. The holy as being is predominant in both, emphasizing the participation element in the divine-human encounter. However, the mystical also transcends the sacramental to criticize the idolatrous tendency in the sacramental. This distinction is particularly important in appreciating the distinct character of Western and Indian mysticisms. The mysticism of the West, following the Greek pattern, sees the mystical as fullness of being without destroying the existing sacramental form. Indian mysticism as mysticism seeks to transcend all forms - although in actual Indian life the demand for concreteness results in a preserving of the gods and the sacramental objects. In Indian mysticism, therefore, there is always a tension between a situation of split consciousness with a conflict of the mystical and the sacramental and a situation of a certain sacramental-mystical synthesis.

Tillich recognizes the difficulty in bringing together the separate conceptions of God based predominantly on one of the elements, the transcendent or the creative ground element. "The holy cannot encounter us in less than personal form." At the same time the holy cannot be identified with a finite reality or a human or divine person, thereby making God a reality *beside* others. Tillich finds the Christian understanding fulfilling the first but failing in respect of the second. In the case of the mystical religions of the East, the second is fulfilled as identification with the absolute but not satisfying the first, which emphasizes 'distance' and a dynamic relationship between the divine and the human.⁵⁶ Tillich is opposed to any easy solution. So he rejects the idea of a fusion of the Christian and Buddhist idea of God, although they

⁵⁶Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.48-49.

share certain common elements. Nor does he approve of a common denominator which would lead to depriving the concrete symbols of their concreteness.⁵⁷

The concept of God for Tillich must be universal. The two criteria of ultimacy and concreteness, are in conflict in the various religious forms, which range from primitive prayer to the most elaborate theological system. It is the key to understanding the dynamics of the history of religion, and it is the basic problem of every doctrine of God, from the earliest priestly wisdom to the most refined discussions of the trinitarian dogma.⁵⁸

The conflict is found in the hindu distinction between the ultimate Brahma power and the concrete god Brahman.⁵⁹

In more than one way Tillich follows Hegel in showing that theism is neither sufficient to define religion nor a superior form of religion. For Tillich, the theistic idea of Judaism, the belief in "one sovereign God", is not complete without reference to the prophetic tradition (beginning with Amos) of Israel, where *justice* was introduced as the *universal principle* which judged both Israel and the other nations. Exclusive monotheism is not an assertion of one particular god against others, but affirmation of God who is God of justice. This "implies that justice is a principle which transcends every particular religion and makes the exclusiveness of any particular religion conditional".⁶⁰ According to Tillich, "this principle of conditional exclusiveness" can "guide our further inquiry into the attitude of Christianity to the world religions".⁶¹

Gilkey would agree with Tillich that there is no common philosophical standpoint beyond the religions. But he would argue against Tillich about the possibility of universal meaning arrived at from a particular tradition.⁶² The latter

⁵⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, p.67.

⁵⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.211.

⁵⁹Tillich, *ST I*, pp.213-4.

⁶⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.31-32.

⁶¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.32.

⁶²Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications" in John Hick & Paul Knitter (ed.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, London: SCM, 1987), p.41. Tillich's position in regard to the former will be seen in his

point of Gilkey suggests that in the realm of knowledge, no idea or framework can have access to universal truth. But when he expresses the ontological basis of praxis, he states that "the absolute [is] relatively present in the relative".⁶³ (This ontological statement is not different from Tillich's.) Gilkey points out the difficulty in affirming the absolute through the particular, but acknowledges the universal's presence in the particular in a relative way. From a Tillichian approach it might be suggested that the way from the particular to the universal is possible by identifying the *structural character* of the absolute, such as the holy as present and the holy as being. Tillich is consistent in giving the universal its place in the epistemological and ontological schemes, for both of them imply the common "universal (logos) structure of reality".

Tillich appreciates the concerns of those who deny any common ground as well as those who affirm it. Those who deny any common ground see the need to *emphasize difference* as the way to discover both the *unity* of religion as well as the wider *scope* of religion. Thus Mark Kline Taylor states:

There is no "ground" to provide a norm for communication across cultural boundaries that is independent of that communicative encounter. There is, however, a shifting terrain for intercultural communication that is significantly more than the relativist abyss some fear to be the consequence of denying common ground.⁶⁴

The idea of common ground in respect of religion has become problematic because of the emphasis on cultural, linguistic and cultic elements. Colin Grant even says that the idea of common essence makes the variations uninteresting.⁶⁵ What is missed here is

concept of the Protestant principle, which as we shall see is a criticism against any particular or overall concept in the name of the Absolute. There seems to be a jump from epistemology to ontology, which demands explanation. This will be done in Chapter V. Tillich's latter statement - that about reaching universal meaning from the concept of one religion - is a problem Tillich addresses in his 'Critical phenomenology, which will be discussed in the next section.

⁶³Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications", p.47.

⁶⁴Mark K. Taylor, "In Praise of Shaky Ground: The Liminal Christ and Cultural Pluralism", *Theology Today*, Vol.XLIII, No.1 (Apr 1986), p.40.

⁶⁵Colin Grant, "The Threat an Prospect in Religious Pluralism", *The Ecumenical Review*, 41 (1989), p.51.

the point Tillich makes repeatedly, namely that religion is its own ground. And in addition, Grant's criticism cannot affect Tillich because the latter does not see the common ground independent of the cultural forms. For Tillich, as we have seen, religion is the substance and meaning of culture.

Through his definition of God as being-itself, Tillich even shows a common ground between negative theology and affirmative theology. He points out the problems with affirmative theology based on being alone and negative theology if negative theology rejects being in God. When negative theology affirms nonbeing in relation to God, it "means "not being anything special," being beyond every concrete predicate. This nonbeing embraces everything; it means being everything; it is being-itself."⁶⁶ This is an affirmation of the transcendence of God, but there is a hesitation to affirm that being-itself cannot be apart from being. Affirmative theology, on the other hand, is right in its belief in God as being, God as living. But denying the presence of nonbeing in God will mean admitting a negative principle apart from God to account for the evil and sin in the world. Since this goes against the idea of God being ultimate, affirmative theology has to posit a dialectical negativity in God Godself.⁶⁷

Thus God as ground of religion implies that there is common ground between the concrete religions. In terms of the concept of ultimate concern, in terms of the idea of the holy of his religious typology and in terms of his ontological understanding of God Tillich has argued for the fact of God as the common ground of religions. And we state again that this is basic to his pluralism, for without the affirmation of such a ground - which affirmation is also an affirmation of the universal structure of reality - the concrete is so particularized to be meaningful for comparisons.

⁶⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.188.

⁶⁷Tillich, *ST I*, pp.188-189.

The transition from our discussion of "God" to "the Christ" is a transition from addressing the ultimate reality as the question implied in and the answer to human existence generally to focussing on how each religion through symbol, myth and cult offers concrete answers to the various existential questions in the name of the ultimate. The fundamental problem of religious pluralism which we identified as the tension between the larger and narrower definitions of religion is now to be discussed more concretely, with reference to Christianity. The tension is between God as the ultimate ground of theology and the Christ as the central and foundational symbol of the Christian faith. The nature of the relation between the two concepts, between God and the Christ, is important, for it will show on the one hand how valid a particular religion is (genuine, profanized or demonized), and on the other hand whether there is a openness to other concrete religions (if the relation is dialectical) and a superiority (if the foundational symbol dominates the God symbol).

3. The Central Symbol of a Religion: Christ the Criterion

The concept of Christ-criterion plays an important role in Tillich's discussion of Christianity's relation to other religions. It was originally formulated within his theological system directed by an apologetic intent, that of presenting Christ as the symbol of the overcoming of the gap between the essential being and existential being of humans. And as apologetic means not simply an indifferent account of faith but an interpretation of the biblical message in response to the particular culture's way of asking (about) the meaning of life, Christology too is required to be interpreted anew with every significant historical change. Such interpretation is necessary despite the fact that Christology, as the foundation of his system, has a definite content.

Here, in terms of three Christological considerations we shall give further and more definitive support to the claim that Tillich is a pluralist. The first of these is

'critical phenomenology', which is a method that identifies a subjective element in the phenomenological investigation of religion in addition to the purely objective approach of pure phenomenology. It will be seen that this phenomenological theory throws light on the special ways in which Tillich uses "criterion" and "final revelation". The two elements that form critical phenomenology will then be the basis for analyzing two aspects of the Christ, namely the concrete element, which expresses Christ as the foundation of Christianity, and the universal element which expresses the Christ as the centre of history.

Critical Phenomenology

The way in which 'criterion' is used in respect of Christ is perhaps best expressed in connection with Tillich's statement of his 'critical phenomenological' theory, which he spells out as an introduction to his discussion of "Revelation", the first symbol or theological answer, in his five-part (or five-symbol) *Systematic Theology*. "Critical phenomenology" is Tillich's tool for determining the "basic concepts" of his system.⁶⁸ As such it is proposed as a method developed from pure phenomenology⁶⁹ and presented as the approach that brings together "an existential-critical element" and "an intuitive-descriptive element". The former element serves as the *criterion* for the selection of the example; arbitrary choice of an example is inadmissible, for that would mean committing the mistake of pure phenomenology, which is the approach of taking any typical example and claiming to find the universal meaning through it. The existential choice, in contrast to arbitrary choice, involves a decision in favour of a "revelation which has been received and which is considered final". The consequence of this decision, namely that it will become critical of all other

⁶⁸Tillich, *ST I*, pp.106-108.

⁶⁹Pure phenomenology believes that universal meaning can be attained through phenomena. Tillich objects to this in every realm including the religious realm, but suggests its possibility in the realm of logical meanings. (Tillich, *ST I*, pp.106-107)

revelations, is also constitutive of the existential-critical element. Through the existential-critical element Tillich is assuming the importance of the practising aspect of one's religion as well as the almost inevitable critical attitude to religious expressions outwith it. Also through this element is affirmed the fact that the experiential aspect of religion determines the choice of the example.

The intuitive-descriptive element is the "technique" which brings out what is universally valid from the chosen example. This second moment of the phenomenological task, as Tillich points out, works out the *universal meaning* of an example (final revelation), which is *the meaning present in* all examples (revelation). Therefore the Christian "final revelation" does not refer to a bare historical fact as the content of revelation, for that would mean that revelation in other religions is either impossible or only anticipatory or partial. Rather it affirms an *understanding* of revelation that is the basis of every revelation.

The meaning of revelation is derived from the "classical" example, but the idea derived in this way is valid of every revelation, however imperfect and distorted the revelatory event actually may be. Each example of revelation is judged in terms of this phenomenological concept, and this concept can be employed as a criterion because it expresses the essential nature of every revelation.⁷⁰

The "imperfect" character of the revelatory event, as we have seen earlier, is due to the universal condition of humans in their existential (estranged) state.

The claim that *final* revelation refers to *that meaning which is present in all* revelations through a critical phenomenological theory might still suggest arrogance and the presupposition that the validity of other religions should mean that they possess the meaning of final revelation, despite Tillich's demand that an investigation of other religions is necessary to show that this is the case. More pointedly, the criticism directed against Tillich is that the concept of final revelation is not open to

⁷⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.108.

challenge from the side of the different religions based on their concepts. Two points should be made to make a Tillichian response to this charge. First, on the basis of Tillich's view that the universal is present in the particular, as discussed earlier, it can be argued that any risk of faith in affirming 'final revelation' in a particular tradition is justified because the universal is immanent in the other traditions too. It is only a matter of identifying it in other traditions with less or more difficulty. Second, though Tillich does not give examples from other religions to justify his claim at this point, we might suggest that his typology of religion, which is often implicit in his theological constructions, does provide some basis for the universality of final revelation. All the three types - the sacramental, mystical and ethical - are based on the concept of divine self-manifestation. In the sacramental the manifestation of the divine is purely concrete, restricted in terms of space, time and group. In the mystical the manifestation is regarded as attaining the universal itself in terms of identity with it, denying or overcoming every concrete manifestation. In the ethical the concrete manifestations are constantly criticized in the name of the universal, and more adequate concrete manifestations are affirmed in the name of the universal. But because ethical religion is more 'worldly', human and social in emphasis it tends to picture the ultimate in terms of justice, order, and other values. All the three types being inadequate in themselves, we have seen Tillich developing a final type in his typology of religion, namely, 'Religion of the Concrete Spirit'. This type according to him includes all that is present in the other types but transcends them. In respect of our present concern with 'final revelation', sacramental religion's varied affirmations of the divine presence in special objects and in all encountered reality is basic. And mystical religion's focus on the "absolutely universal" and ethical religion's demand for realizations that are "absolutely concrete" are in a dialectic. We can see the basic element and the dialectic present in the 'final revelation', which he describes as "absolutely universal" and "absolutely concrete".

It is the failure to appreciate the *two moments*, existential-critical and intuitive-descriptive, of the phenomenological task that has led to unwarranted criticisms of Tillich. D.A.T. Thomas goes to the extent of saying that Tillich falls on the side of Barth and Kraemer - despite Tillich's criticism of them - in claiming the relation of Christ to the religions as one of judgment. According to him the two parties say the same thing, Tillich employing the "phenomenological method" and the Neo-orthodox champions the "theological method".⁷¹ Thomas, here, fails to take account of the special features of Tillich's critical phenomenology. Also contributory to his negative evaluation of Tillich on this point is his proposal that there is a 'formal judgment' and 'normative judgment' of the religions in Tillich. The former is a natural one which is one religion judging another - and hence Christianity judging other religions - following the same tendency of "natural self-affirmation" as found in the realm of knowledge.⁷² The latter, namely, "normative judgment" has a serious implication because it leads Thomas to see 'final revelation' together with two other "interlocking criteria" (Protestant Principle and the New Being) as imposing on other religions:

These three criteria operate irrespective of group, whether religious or secular. They operate virtually in total independence of the groups upon which the criteria are brought to bear. They are outside and exercise judgment both in the sense that they are critical, i.e. evaluate critically the group upon which the criteria are brought to bear, and in the sense of exercising power against the group, power to change as a result of the exercise of critical evaluation. They are a power from without which works within the depths of the groups.⁷³

⁷¹D.A.T. Thomas, *Paul Tillich and the World Religions*, p.166. Had Thomas appreciated the existential-critical element of Tillich's phenomenology, he would not have remarked that in Tillich there is a "Christ triumphalism" if not a "Christian triumphalism". (*ibid.*, p.238)

⁷²D.A.T. Thomas, *Paul Tillich and the World Religions*, p.246. Thomas sees this remark of Tillich (Tillich, *CEWR*, p.28) as one which stands without any qualification in regard to the relation between the religions. We must point out here that Tillich shows in the ensuing discussion that in the case of Christianity's encounter with the religions, not everything held by the other religion can be legitimately negated. Rather "a dialectical union of rejection and acceptance in the relation between the two groups" is suggested (Tillich, *CEWR*, p.29) - which we shall discuss later.

⁷³D.A.T. Thomas, *Paul Tillich and the World Religions*, p.246-247.

The terms, "in total independence of", "outside", "from without", which Thomas uses for the three concepts is a gross misunderstanding of how Tillich sees the power symbolized by them manifests itself. This power, principle, is not from outwith but is *in* every being and in every religion. We have already shown that for Tillich transcendence is inconceivable without immanence. If the divine is not already present in them, the divine is not the ultimate in metaphysical terms and not the unconditional in existential terms. Thomas sees these concepts in terms of transcendence alone. He pictures the divine power coming from outwith and working "within the depths of the groups". But the divine itself is the *depth*. The divine does not come from outside to take abode in the heart of humans or a religious group from time to time, as Thomas imagines. Rather it is the depth that constitutes every reality, and from which every reality derives power to transform itself.

With regard to Tillich's theology of religions, then, critical phenomenology's first element, the existential-critical, expresses a pluralist thrust without any ambiguity by its affirmation of the fact and necessity of one's particular religion. There is no suggestion of an *a priori* superiority of one particular religion's experience and truth over another's. But it appears that through the second element, the intuitive-descriptive, Tillich has made the case for the Christ example's superiority by showing the final revelation's universal significance: as "an example in which absolute concreteness and absolute universality are united."⁷⁴ In other words, although in theory Tillich's two functions of critical phenomenology are complementary and suggest a scheme that does not allow superiority to one religion over others, in practice the nature of the claim that is made in the second function suggests a Christian superiority. Whether there is an inconsistency between method and the content of Tillich's Christology becomes the crucial issue here.

⁷⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.107.

We shall discuss this problem in two stages, using the two functions as the basis of understanding Tillich's Christology, as they offer the possibility of capturing the essence of Tillich's Christology as it concerns the Christian on the one hand, and the possibility of interpreting as accurately as possible the implications of Christology in respect of other religions. The existential-critical function is the methodological principle behind our discussion of "The Christ, the Foundation of Christianity", and the intuitive-descriptive behind "The Christ, the the Centre of History".

The Christ, the Foundation of Christianity

The existential-critical criterion of critical phenomenology refers to the concrete basis of one's faith. The content of the Christian's ultimate concern is the Christ, who is affirmed as the foundation of the Christian faith because as New Being he "conquers existential estrangement and thereby makes faith possible". In this content of ultimate concern two things are involved: the one is the experience of transformation, and the other is the picture of the New Being which is the basis of this transformation.⁷⁵ The *experiential* aspect of overcoming estrangement, which can progressively lead one to see one's reunion with ultimate reality and with all beings (including those who express their faith in different ways), and the *reflective* aspect (doing theology), which interprets the meaning of the picture of the New Being in universal terms, together enter into the statements about the significance of the Christian faith in relation to other religions. We argue that the inevitable mutuality of these two aspects make some of Tillich statements appear un-pluralist. But given the background of the Christ-event leading one to experience greater union and partnership with other beings, the discussion below will suggest such statements should be taken in an inclusive (not indicating inclusivism) sense.

⁷⁵Tillich, *ST II*, p.114.

The New Being "is the restorative principle of the whole of this [Tillich's] theological system"⁷⁶ because the question-answer method of correlation finds a concrete historical bridging of the question-answer correlation in Jesus as the Christ. In the Christ essential being is not just potential, and the overcoming of estrangement under the conditions of existence not just fragmentary. It is total, complete actualization in history.⁷⁷ All the other divine answers to the questions implied in human existence demand the concrete manifestation in the Christ. "God" and God's "Revelation" (including the final revelation) are answers to the questions of "being" and "reason". The concreteness of these questions and answers are expressed in terms of the Christ. Similarly, "Spirit" and "Kingdom of God" are the answers to the questions of "life" and "history". And they need Christ as the central manifestation of unambiguous life and the meaning of history. Thus the Christ is both the concrete and universal symbol for Christian theology.

It is the attempt to speak at once in concrete and universal terms that the ontological framework is adopted by Tillich. Through it, the New Being can be expressed as a symbol for a particular tradition but also as expressing its value beyond it. In fact he states that "[t]he coming of Christ is not the foundation of a new religion but the transformation of the old state of things. Consequently, the church is not a religious community but the anticipatory representation of a new reality, the New Being as community."⁷⁸ The New Being is universally present, for the very quest for the New Being presupposes that it is already present.⁷⁹ Tillich sees two main types of quests for the New Being. The first is the quest in polytheism and mysticism, both expecting the New Being in a non-historical way. The New Being is either seen in divine incarnations, oracles, etc., or in the

⁷⁶Tillich, *ST II*, p.119.

⁷⁷Tillich, *ST II*, 119.

⁷⁸Tillich, *ST III*, 258.

⁷⁹Tillich, *ST II*, p.80.

transcending of the existential sphere altogether. In the second type, the New Being is expected in history, in the transformation of history. "The transformation occurs in and through a historical process which is unique, unrepeatable, irreversible."⁸⁰ And as we shall soon see, Tillich's idea of the New Being as the "centre of history" is the most adequate manifestation of the New Being as compared to the New Being actualized "in a slow progress, in definite qualitative degrees ... or at its end when history is elevated to eternity".⁸¹

A religion that expects historical fulfilment will attach greater significance to personal qualities and social realities. This was true of Judaism, and Tillich shows that Christianity adopted a *personal* symbol as its central symbol. The Christian witness is "that in *one* personal life essential manhood has appeared under the conditions of existence without being conquered by them".⁸² Being personal and historical means sharing in human finitude, and the Christ shares in this. The Christ shares everything of the human predicament and is directed by God, even in his explicit function as the New Being:

God's directing creativity in the case of man works through his freedom. Man's destiny is determined by the divine creativity, but through man's self-determination, that is, through his finite freedom. In this respect the "history of salvation" and the "history of the Savior" are ultimately determined in the same way as history is generally and as the history of every individual man.⁸³

The human, historical character of the Christ is expressed in so clear terms so as to guard it against any idea of the Christ "as a third reality between God and man", the idea of the Christ as half-god and half-man.⁸⁴ The language Tillich uses to

⁸⁰Tillich, *ST II*, p.88

⁸¹Tillich, *ST II*, p.88.

⁸²Tillich, *ST II*, p.94.

⁸³Tillich, *ST II*, p.130.

⁸⁴Tillich, *ST II*, p.93.

express the work of the Christ through the term 'represent' shows that the Christ does not share the same ontological nature as God. The Christ

represents God to man. He does not represent man to God but shows what God wants man to be. He represents to those who live under the conditions of existence what man essentially is and therefore ought to be under these conditions.⁸⁵

Tillich's seeing the Christ as fully human is most explicit in Tillich's option of a "low Christology", which according to him is truly the high Christology because "God is near to the lowest as well as to the highest".⁸⁶ A Supranaturalist Christology is thus rejected because it presents Christ as God Godself coming into the world in the (human) form that God has chosen but fails to show the universal presence of the divine in the human. So a Christology of an absolutist theology of religions such as Barth's breaks down in the face of a Christian premise.

A Christology that Liberal theology embraces, namely, one which does not claim any identity of the Christ's being with God's being but sees Christ's uniqueness in the exemplary character of his life and actions is equally rejected by Tillich, Because the Christ has to be understood in his "being"-character.

Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in the totality of his being, not in any special expressions of it. It is his being that makes him the Christ because his being has the quality of the New Being beyond the split of essential and existential being. From this it follows that neither his words, deeds, or sufferings nor what is called his "inner life" make him the Christ. They are all expressions of the New Being, which is the quality of his being, and this, his being, precedes and transcends all its expressions.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Tillich, *ST II*, p.93 (italics added). In his use of "represent", Tillich anticipates, for instance, the distinction Ogden makes later between Christ as "representative of" and as "constitutive of" God's salvation, as we shall see in the last chapter under "Towards a Dialectical Pluralism".

⁸⁶Tillich, *ST II*, p.147.

⁸⁷Tillich, *ST II*, p.121. The Christ cannot be the final revelation "if he is put into the sphere of personal achievement" only. (Tillich, *ST I*, p.137)

A functional Christology of the sort that claims significance for Jesus simply in terms of Jesus' extraordinary actions is inadequate because it either denies or hides the source of the Christ's New Being. Each individual trait of Jesus is significant only in so far as it is open for the receiving of the New Being.⁸⁸ Tillich's preference for what we might call a *symbolic Christology*, based on his idea that theology is possible only through symbols, emerges here. Symbolic Christology, as we shall see now, seeks to show the ontological concept of God expressed adequately through the Christ-symbol as answer to the questions implied in human experience in the particular personal, social, political and any critical historical conditions. A consequence of this acceptance of the Christ as answer by a community is that it is suggested as an answer beyond the theological circle because the beyond is included in the theological or Christological vision. This vision or affirmation is that the New Being is latent everywhere. The way in which this is affirmed will mean an affirmation or denial of pluralism.

Ontology is significant in respect of Christology because it provides the basis for "a religious statement of existential-symbolic character". Ontology represents the universal character in reality as a whole, in God, in humans and in their world and experience. The focus of ontology, in religious terms, is identification of the nature of life in its tensions and the possibility of overcoming the tensions. This is implied in the concept of God, but is expressed concretely in terms of the Christ, the picture that is constitutive of revelation for Christians. The Christ is the picture of the power of overcoming tensions as actual in the finite human, Jesus.

Jesus, like every man, is finite freedom, Without that, he would not be equal with mankind and could not be the Christ. God alone is above freedom and

⁸⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.151.

destiny. In him alone the tensions of this and all other polarities are eternally conquered; in Jesus they are actual.⁸⁹

The Christ-symbol is the best symbol to represent the appearance of the New Being because only a personal symbol, which has the *potentialities of being completely actual* in it, can express the human situation and the possibility of transforming it adequately. Only humans are developed selves interacting with the world. Only humans have the power of self-transcendence which includes the power of reason; hence they have the capability of finding universal structures to understand and interpret their world and experience. In theologically significant terms, it is only the human person who is constantly aware of the tensions in her/him and seeks ways to deal with them. So only in that existence where the estranged character of existence is evident can existence be conquered.⁹⁰ Hence the superior character of the personal symbol.

Also, because human beings participate in the social, political and cultural spheres with much or less power of bringing changes in them, and are aware of and address the problems in them, Tillich would see the personal symbol as more comprehensive than any social, political, institutional or legal symbol. Similarly recognizing that humans belong to the physical, biological and psychological realms and interact with them at the same time, he points out that everything that happens to humans has effects in the universe. Tillich does not raise the question whether the cosmic elements, separately or together, provide more comprehensive symbols than the personal, because he has already chosen that the personal symbol is the best and is keen to include the cosmic elements in the personal so that he could speak of universal salvation in Christ which includes humans and the cosmos.⁹¹ The choice of the personal symbol cannot be said to be unreasonable,

⁸⁹Tillich, *ST II*, p.127.

⁹⁰Tillich, *ST II*, p.120.

⁹¹See Tillich, *ST II*, pp.120-121.

given the *aim* of and *method* of theology, the aim being the understanding of human estrangement from and reunion with the ground of being, and the method involving the human as the starting-point.

We might point out that Tillich's claim for a personal symbol is one that falls partly on the side of the second or interpretative function of Tillich's phenomenology. Tillich clearly states that the claim of finality made for the Christ should be taken seriously by the theologian simply because it is the Christian claim: "final revelation .. means the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable revelation, that which is the criterion of all the others. This is the Christian claim, and this is the basis of a Christian theology."⁹² But this does not mean that an arbitrary claim made by a religion should be taken seriously. In the case under consideration, there is no arbitrariness because on the one hand, it states the reality of the community's experience of the Christ, and on the other hand, the experience serves as the criterion (phenomenology's first function) to criticize and validate experiences and symbols within Christianity. Tillich states: "Historically and systematically, everything else in Christianity is a corroboration of the simple assertion that Jesus is the Christ."⁹³ This is the case because Christ is the fundamental paradox:

The appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence, yet judging and conquering them, is the paradox of the Christian message. This is the only paradox and the source of all paradoxical statements in Christianity.⁹⁴

The soteriological fact of overcoming estrangement and the consequent acts of faith and love, which are the marks of being united with the divine source, is even pointed out by Tillich as a way of verifying revelation:

They [the biblical words] constitute the ultimate touchstone for what can and cannot become the Word of God for someone. Nothing is the Word of God if

⁹²Tillich, *ST I*, p.133.

⁹³Tillich, *ST II*, p.92.

⁹⁴Tillich, *ST II*, p.92.

it contradicts the faith and love which are the work of the Spirit and which constitute the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ.⁹⁵

Our attempt to interpret Tillich on the basis of his critical phenomenology is supported by Tillich's own attempt in his last volume of *ST* when he distinguishes between the formal and material concepts of faith.⁹⁶ The formal definition is the same as that which he gives for religion as "ultimate concern"; this definition, as we have seen, applies to all religions. The material definition of faith arises from within a religion, Christianity in this case, and hence expresses faith in Christological terms: "faith is the state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ". Tillich recognizes that the material definition can and has led to making the Christian definition as the fulfilling point, towards which all other religions are striving. He finds this claim unwarranted, acknowledging the Spiritual Presence's presence in other domains:

Faith as the state of being opened by the Spiritual Presence to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life is a description which is universally valid despite its particular, Christian background.⁹⁷

A consideration of Tillich's distinction between the latent and manifest Spiritual Community should conclude this discussion on the Christ's foundational character for Christianity. The Spiritual Community "is determined by the appearance of Jesus as the Christ" but is "not identical with the Christian churches".⁹⁸ This "Spiritual Community contains an indefinite variety of

⁹⁵Tillich, *ST* III, p.133. Similar to Tillich, Gandhi, seeing Truth as both experiential and transcendent, suggests a dialectic between the transcendent and the existentially salvific:

Now when we want to find out whether a thing is good or bad, I do not go to a particular book but I look at the total effect of Hinduism. In Hinduism we have got an admirable foot rule to measure every Shastra and every rule of conduct, and that is Truth. Whatever falls from the 'truth' should be rejected, no matter where it comes from. (M.K.Gandhi, *What is Hinduism?* Quoted in K.P. Palta, "Hinduism and Marxism: Continuities", Clarence O. McMullen (ed.), *Marxism and the Religions of India: Spirit and Matter*, Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1979, p.11.)

⁹⁶Tillich, *ST* III, pp.138-9.

⁹⁷Tillich, *ST* III, p.139.

⁹⁸Tillich, *ST* III, p.162.

expressions of faith and does not exclude any of them. It is open in all directions because it is based on the central manifestation of the Spiritual presence."⁹⁹ After this affirmation of the universal presence of the ultimate in human beings and in all forms and reality as a whole, Tillich distinguishes between the *latent* Spiritual Community, which has the Spiritual Presence's impact upon it but lacks the ultimate principle of resistance to profanization and demonization, and the *manifest* Spiritual Community, which has the principle of resistance and applies it self-critically. There is certainly a claim of superiority in this particular interpretation of the Christ, which is identical with the Protestant principle. Since the full significance of this distinction can only be appreciated in the light of the Protestant principle, our evaluation of the distinction will be kept on hold until the next section.

Now we shall proceed to discuss the universal element in Tillich's Christology.

Christ, the Centre of History

Two main ways may be identified in Tillich's presentation of the concept Christ as the centre of history. Centre is related to all historical realities on the historical frame just as the ground of being is related to all beings on the ontological frame. This is Tillich speaking about the self-transcending character of history. This is one use of centre in which history is affirmed, and a historical interpretation of history is suggested as possible. The other use is in connection with the traditional Christian idea of final revelation. Tillich sees final revelation as the centre that divides preparatory revelation from receiving revelation. This certainly has special significance for Christian theology, according to Tillich. But the way Tillich interprets its significance for those outside the Christian circle will be crucial to ascertaining his pluralism.

⁹⁹Tillich, *ST* III, p.165.

Tillich argues in different ways for the importance of the idea of history. As we shall see, first, from the ontological standpoint, he needs to show that the historical frame is a distinct frame but based on the universal structure of being (which is marked by the subject-object structure, and which includes various polarities through which being and meaning reveal themselves). Ontology must, at the same time, take account of the historical process to determine the nature of history and to revise any inadequacy in the conception of the universal structure of being. Second, as ontology affirms the historical, the kind of interpretation of history that is significant - certainly not the record of past events or an accounting based on social, economic and political forces alone - to ontology is the meaning of history itself. It raises the question as to which of the understandings of history is adequate, whether history as circular, or as progress, or understood in utopian terms, or understood in terms of a meaning-directedness which is represented by 'centre of history'.

At one point Tillich comes close to stating this two-fold purpose with regard to the concept of the centre of history: that the centre is "a point where its [history's] meaning becomes visible and in the light of which an interpretation of history becomes possible".¹⁰⁰ The two are related in that ontology provides a theoretical frame for that interpretation of history which expresses ultimate meaning. Here Tillich's attempt to proclaim hope and meaning to humans in anxiety is clear. But does this intent lead him to identify Christ with history itself and with meaning itself such that the attempts of other religions to interpret their respective worlds and histories as meaningful are excluded? We shall now see if this is a consequence of Tillich's elaborations of the concept of centre.

It is not difficult to see Tillich's idea of "ground" or "depth" in relation to being, reason, or existence, evident in the term "centre" in relation to history. As

¹⁰⁰Tillich, *PE*, p.254.

history is horizontal, it can only recognize a point on the same plane. Hence the term "centre" is appropriate. History is also being, for Tillich, and so it should conform to the general ontological pattern of the ground of being being present in every being on the one hand, and the ground of being being the source of the constant overcoming of the tension between being and nonbeing on the other hand. The first point about presence is expressed by Tillich in terms of the relationship between the "great *kairos*" to the relative *kairoi*, which is a matter of vision but requiring observation and analysis of the historical situation where the Spirit is claimed to be present.

The relation of the one *kairos* to the *kairoi* is the relation of the criterion to that which stands under the criterion and the relation of the source of power to that which is nourished by the source of power.¹⁰¹

Tillich's approach of seeing the manifestations of the Spirit from a central principle and structure, and not as disparate happenings, which are then open to distortion and error, is obvious (although the distortion can happen in the "great *kairos*" as well).¹⁰² He also recognizes the paradox in the affirmation of something particular as universal, but points out that it is said from the perspective of the Christian circle or the existential-critical criterion: "*Kairos* in its *unique* and universal sense is, for Christian faith, the appearing of Jesus as the Christ."¹⁰³ Elsewhere, in a free response given in a seminar, Tillich points out both the revelatory character and the critical character of the centre of history, again limiting his statement to his "Christian commitment", concrete standpoint.

Can there be in the development of history a preferred moment, a moment of unique character, in which the world situation manifests itself? Now it is my Christian conviction that there can be, for I see in the image of the Christ in the New Testament a revelatory and a critical power, which may have been approached elsewhere, but which always remains the ultimate criterion. For

¹⁰¹Tillich, *ST* III, p.395.

¹⁰²Tillich, *ST* III, p.396.

¹⁰³Tillich, *PE*, p.46.

this reason I have called Jesus as the Christ the center of history. I mean that here, at one decisive point, the relationship between God and finite man was not interrupted. I would say that we have something in these two elements that has appeared for the first time in its full measure. Therefore Jesus was considered to be more than the prophets. The prophetic spirit never revealed itself this way. They saw; they expected; but they did not express in themselves what we find in the biblical picture of the Christ.¹⁰⁴

Tillich is free of any exclusivist tendency here in two ways: his stating that Christ is the centre of history from the Christian viewpoint, and his presenting of the Christ *not simply as an event* but as standing for a *content*, namely, *in him there is no interruption between God and humans*.

This last point suggests Tillich's attempt to relate the *historical* event of the Christ to express the ontological phenomenon of the Christ's participation in God as the answer to human estrangement. Thus the focus is not so much on the event but what it points to. This point underlies Tillich's statement of the Christ as a qualitative centre:

The event "Jesus as the Christ" is unique but not isolated; it is dependent on past and future, as they are dependent on it. It is the qualitative centre in a process which proceeds from an indefinite future which we call, symbolically, the beginning and the end of history.¹⁰⁵

From this special point of In the concept of centre, the Christ is claimed as the *fulfilment* of both the historical and the non-historical expectations of the New Being. The universalism that late Judaism attained presented Christianity the conceptual tools for this interpretation: the Messiah being "elevated to cosmic significance", the law as having "eternal validity", and the divine Wisdom inspired by God as a "principle of creation and salvation".¹⁰⁶ In addition to this horizontal emphasis, Christianity also

¹⁰⁴Tillich, *UC*, p.139.

¹⁰⁵Tillich, *STIII*, p.156.

¹⁰⁶Tillich, *ST II*, p.89. We might observe that Tillich is focusing more on the universal principles but less on the concrete functions of the Messiah and for whose's sake, on the contents of the law, and on the question of what sort of salvation and to which nation. Would the concrete historical facts go against the universalist attitude that Tillich suggests? Perhaps

took into it the vertical dimension through the Greek doctrine of the Logos. Paul's Christ-mysticism and the doctrine of the Spirit contain the vertical element. Both dimensions are included in the idea of the Christ as centre, and they are important because on the one hand expectation and fulfilment are actual on the horizontal plane, and on the other hand the content of fulfilment is nothing other than the fullness of the Unconditional becoming visible.

This inclusive historical-nonhistorical constitution of the "centre of history" provides an important basis for appreciating Tillich's Christology. It is obviously opposed to a narrow Supranaturalist interpretation, which sees Christ as negating all history except the Christ-event, or a relativist approach, which can compare different expressions of meaning in history but which has no criterion to judge itself and to interact with other religions.

The idea of Christ as the centre of history can also be seen as demanded by the very nature of the theological enterprise. To be a theologian, for Tillich, requires taking all the contents of the Christian faith as one's ultimate concern as well as participating in the Christian community on the one hand, and taking account of the way the universal logos is experienced and interpreted in the wider community's concrete situation seriously on the other hand. This means that any theological affirmation of the Christ has to be stated in universal terms. So Christ is not simply Lord of the Church, he is rather the "centre of history".

But this demand for expression in universal terms is done by Tillich from his concrete Christian standpoint, as we have seen. And Tillich expresses this commitment to concreteness in respect of the Christological doctrine of final revelation, even at the risk of undermining the significance of other revelations. We

Tillich sees the early Christian writers picking up just the *sense* about the wider reality which the Jews attained in order to express the universality of the Christ.

shall now examine Tillich's interpretation of this doctrine, not from the point of view of its correspondence to other interpretations of it but from the concern to the light it can throw on assessing his theology of religions.

Final revelation itself is not restricted to the Christ, for Tillich. Christ, as the foundation for the Christian faith, is the final revelation for the Christian. For the Hindu, mystical experience is the final revelation. In the case of a humanist, though there is no final revelation, the claim of moral autonomy and the guiding influence of the picture of the synoptic Jesus have some correspondence to the concept of final revelation. In other words, what is concrete but regarded as ultimate or as having ultimate significance is final revelation.¹⁰⁷ Tillich's usual attempt to present a concept as a formal concept is evident here too. Macquarrie fails to see this and makes an outright criticism of Tillich simply on the basis of speaking in terms of "preparatory revelation" and "final revelation"¹⁰⁸ However, both Tillich's attempt at developing *formal* theological concepts from the important concepts of his Christian standpoint and Macquarrie's *pragmatic* concern ("practical considerations" being the heading under which he criticizes Tillich) of acknowledging the special value of a revelation for the community concerned should be taken seriously. So the question, what exactly is important in the concept of final revelation, arises.

For Tillich, final revelation refers to concrete revelation in history, or "actual" revelation.

From the point of view of the theological circle, actual revelation is necessarily final revelation, for the person who is grasped by a revelatory

¹⁰⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.132. Also: "For the followers of a world religion, the event of their foundation is the centre of history. This is true not only of Christianity and Judaism but also of Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism" (Tillich, *ST III*, p.392)

¹⁰⁸J. Macquarrie, "Christianity and Other Faiths", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XX:1, p.43.

experience believes it to be the truth concerning the mystery of being and his relation to it.¹⁰⁹

What is actual and concrete can have significance for a particular group only. Thus Tillich points out that final revelation in relation to the Christ is a "Christian claim", thus consistently applying the existential-critical criterion (of Critical phenomenology) to Christology. And he seeks to draw out the criteria for the claim of final revelation in respect of the Christ. from the actual revelation itself. He suggests a "double test of finality", namely "uninterrupted unity with the ground of his being and the continuous sacrifice of himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ".¹¹⁰ Jesus maintains complete union with God by his continuous experience and acknowledgement of participating in God and by surrendering himself completely to God, which surrender actually is possible only by participating in God. Thus Jesus's very being becomes revelatory in that it points to God. The acknowledgement of his finiteness and his dependence on God for his true being are revelatory for that is ultimately significant as salvific truth. The revelation is at once salvation. This is one thread in the claim of "finality".

The second element in the claim of finality has to do with Jesus's sacrifice of himself as a medium of revelation along with every finite picture of him including that of his messianic significance in order that he might be transparent to the divine mystery. Thus "[t]he decisive trait in his picture is the continuous self-surrender of Jesus who is Jesus to Jesus who is the Christ."¹¹¹ This element of self-surrender will also appear as self-negation in our discussion of Tillich's concept of the Protestant principle, which offers a broader scope for the consideration of this point.

Both the elements that have to do with Jesus's finality have so far been seen from within the perspective of the existential-critical criterion. In this regard there is

¹⁰⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.132.

¹¹⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.137.

¹¹¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.134.

no Christian superiority. This trend carries through in his elaboration of the constitution of final revelation in terms of the objective ("miracle") event and the subjective ("ecstatic") reception by the individual or community concerned.¹¹² It is when Tillich moves on to perform the intuitive-descriptive phenomenological task that the universal claim causes concern. This task is within the remit of doing theology for him, for without it the Christ-event would remain a matter of past history and have no existential significance. So the following universal claims are part of the doctrine of final revelation subject to the "double test of finality".

The final revelation, the revelation in Jesus as the Christ, is universally valid, because it includes the criterion of every revelation and is the *finis* or *telos* (intrinsic aim) of all of them. The final revelation is the criterion of every revelation which precedes or follows. It is the criterion of every religion and of every culture, not only of the culture and religion in and through which it has appeared.¹¹³

As an existential statement, the above makes perfect sense, and can be said to be free of absolutism, because similar claims are admissible in the case of other religions, provided that they too affirm dialectically the concrete symbols of their respective traditions. But Tillich does not allow this possibility.

He takes on a critical approach towards other religions by showing the inadequacies of the central events on which they are based. Judaism has an element of universality in its understanding of history through prophetic self-criticism, but the particularism of its own history is not broken. Judaism can have no centre because it only has "prophetic and apocalyptic expectations", which point to the end of history rather than to any possibility of "inner-historical fulfilment". Islam has not broken the law and its emphasis on educational maturity (thereby making revelation and its reception inconsequential) on the one hand, and on the other hand cannot provide a

¹¹²Tillich, *ST I*, pp.136-137.

¹¹³Tillich, *ST I*, p.137.

centre because the appearance of the prophet Muhammad "does not constitute an event in which history receives a meaning which is universally valid". Buddhism fails from the very start because illumination can happen at any time, and there is no historical movement that prepares for the reception of the Buddha so that that point can have universal significance.¹¹⁴ And Tillich concludes that only the Christ-event can claim to be the universal centre of history, but admits that this is done in *daring* of faith and in a *rational* interpretation of this faith:

The appearance of Jesus as the Christ is the historical event in which history becomes aware of itself and its meaning. There is - even for an empirical and relativistic approach - no other event of which this *could* be asserted. But the *actual* assertion is and remains a matter of daring faith.¹¹⁵

The two functions of critical phenomenology have been applied in this claim of Christ as the centre of history. In performing the second task of showing the universal significance of the Christ, other claims for a universal centre of history have been criticized in daring faith. Because the claim is one of daring faith, Tillich should be open to correction in principle. For Tillich, as we shall see in the next chapter, dialogue involves serious criticisms of the other's position and reworking of one's own conceptions on the basis of the criticisms of the other.

We shall now consider briefly Tillich's treatment of the history of revelation and the place of the final revelation in it. Tillich himself is not sure whether he should call his understanding of the history of revelation with the Christ as its centre "history of revelation". So he puts it within quotation marks in the first few instances of using it, given the facts that it has no connection with the history of religion or with all the individual revelatory instances. This history of revelation affirms all revelations but subjects them to a *revelatory pattern* that consists of three elements: *preparatory revelation*, *final revelation* and *receiving revelation*. This is not a history in the

¹¹⁴Tillich, *ST* III, pp.392-393.

¹¹⁵Tillich, *ST* III, p.393.

historical sense of actual events, but in the existential sense of experience within a revelatory situation. But both religious and cultural history are involved in the outworking of this existential revelatory pattern.¹¹⁶

The history of revelation is history interpreted in the light of the final revelation. The event of final revelation establishes itself as the center, aim, and origin of the revelatory events which occur in the period of preparation and in the period of reception.¹¹⁷

The preparatory period is described by Tillich largely in terms of his religious typology. It is characterized by the sacramental object as the medium of revelation and mysticism and prophetism (rational criticism included here) as critical attempts to distinguish the revelatory source from the sacramental object. The role of prophetism is decisive in the history of salvation because it tries to save distorted sacramental objects without devaluing them. They are purified. Tillich finds the Old Testament providing the basic form of preparatory revelation, namely, *reception*, *rejection* and *transformation*. And in concrete, historical terms, it is only the history of Israel, with its idea of the *group as bearer* of revelation, can immediately precede the *Christ as the bearer* of revelation in a personal life - in which alone a complete self-sacrifice is possible. With the emergence of final revelation, which in principle was present in preparatory revelation as its aim, the Church becomes the bearer of final revelation. The Church's task of continuously *receiving* this final revelation and *interpreting* it suggests an unsurpassability of the final revelation, although this can be claimed only in a "risk of faith".¹¹⁸

Tillich's use of the concept of centre together with his religious typology in his development of the concept of final revelation does enable him to preserve one of the traditional Christological doctrines and use it to affirm the meaning of history.

¹¹⁶Tillich, *ST I*, pp.137-138.

¹¹⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.138.

¹¹⁸Tillich, *ST I*, pp.139-144.

Although these two-fold apologetic intentions should be appreciated, his use of the "centre" concept and religious typology in his interpretation of the final revelation and the history of salvation is a construction that lacks objectivity in the sense seeing each religion in its own right and in terms of its own history and self-understanding. Tillich's idea of objectivity is different, for he sees each revelatory situation as an objective event, which bears all the elements of the structure of the history of revelation. This seems to be his basic premise, and on its basis he grants validity to revelation in every religion. The self-transcending character of history and the final revelation are identified: "an event which is prepared by history and is received in history, but [which] cannot be derived from history".¹¹⁹ One implication of this is that *revelatory* power is granted to all revelations. But he sees the full *critical* power only in the Christ as the final revelation. The critical power, or rather the self-critical power, that Tillich claims for the final revelation, however, is not something that is totally inherent that no external influence is needed. He in fact states that "the final revelation needs the corrective of mysticism in order to transcend its own finite symbols."¹²⁰ On the basis of this critical power, which Tillich stresses in the final revelation, we might say in Tillich's favour that he is approaching a formal concept of revelation, although developed from the Christian. This might be inferred from a statement he makes about the universality of revelation.

The revelatory side is not lost if a revelation comes to an end; but its idolatrous side is destroyed. That which was revelatory in it is preserved as an element in more embracing and more purified revelations, and everything revelatory is potentially present in the final revelation, which cannot come to an end because the bearer of it does not claim anything for himself.¹²¹

Thus it is in this light that his Christology raises questions about its full pluralist witness. As a systematic theologian Tillich feels that he has to enter fully into

¹¹⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.219.

¹²⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.140.

¹²¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.128.

the Christian heritage and interpret, after clarification and correction if necessary, the main dogmas, especially that of Jesus as the Christ, in line with his systematic principles. While doing this he is fully aware that he is not writing a 'world theology' and that he is within the Christian theological circle. So he accepts the Christian claim regarding fulfilment of all religions in Christ as his *own* statement, and attempts to express it in terms that will affirm religious elements in all religions, including Christianity.

4. The Protestant Principle

Just as Tillich developed the Christ criterion from the historical Jesus event, he also constructed an equally important theological concept, namely the Protestant principle, from the historical fact of the Protestant revolt in the sixteenth century. As a historical movement with its particular dogmatic emphases, Protestantism is *narrow* and it might appear an unfriendly partner for an open interreligious dialogue. But Tillich suggests that this

restriction is overcome due to the fact that the Protestant theologian does not only look at positions other than his own in an evaluating and criticizing way, but that he also has a principle higher than his own and the others, from which he looks at both positions, his own as a Protestant theologian and that of all other religions.¹²²

Thus the Protestant principle has a *larger* sense, and it is this sense that is crucial for him when he uses it in relation to the religions. We shall see that Tillich develops the Protestant principle in terms of his overall theological definitions and theological method, although one of the two main functions it has is a critical function. As he points out, the Protestant principle is the "permanent principle, active in all periods"; it is the principle "implied in the Spirit's fight against the ambiguities of religion".¹²³ The

¹²²Tillich, *ERQR*, p.59.

¹²³Tillich, *ST* III, p.197.

following meaning that Tillich gives to the Protestant principle while discussing the importance of theological criticism from within the religions might be taken as definitive: Protestant principle is the power (*principium*) or beginning (*arche*) of "protest of religion against religion within religion in the name of God, something which happens in all religions".¹²⁴

This definition of the Protestant principle refers us back to the distinction we saw between Tillich's larger and narrower concepts of religion. The special light that the Protestant principle throws on the relation between the two concepts will be discussed first in this section. Second, the Protestant principle as fulfilling an important function in relation to religious symbols will concern us, so as to lead to the third task. This task is that of showing how the symbol of the Christ fulfils the function of the Protestant principle. The above three senses of the Protestant principle will be seen to be related and complementary. The significance and "superiority" that Tillich claims for the Protestant principle in interreligious discussions will finally be discussed in the light of the above findings.

The larger concept is only present in terms of specific narrower concepts. This is also expressed differently by Tillich as the ultimate concern being present in various concrete concerns. It is not difficult for us to suggest that the Protestant principle derives from Tillich's definition of the ultimate concern itself, "a concern which *qualifies* all other concerns as preliminary".¹²⁵ And since only being-itself is the only ultimate concern that does not become a preliminary concern, the Protestant principle has its basis in being-itself and functions in the name of being-itself. In Tillich's ontology, being-itself possesses the quality of appearing in every being as the power of being. This means that being-itself does not distinguish between the sacred and

¹²⁴Tillich, *ERQR*, p.15.

¹²⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.4.

secular contexts, but is present in both. The same is true in the case of the Protestant principle, and Tillich points out at the end of his German period the fact of the Protestant principle being more significantly at work outwith the churches:

Perhaps more men of today have experienced the boundary-situation outside than inside the churches. The Protestant principle may be proclaimed by movements that are neither ecclesiastical nor secular but belong to both spheres, by groups and individuals who, with or without Christian and Protestant symbols, express the true human situation in face of the ultimate and unconditional. If they do it better and with more authority than the official churches, then they and not the churches represent Protestantism for the man of today.¹²⁶

In a formal way Tillich accepts the critical functions in religion and culture as a function of the Protestant principle in so far as no religious experience or cultural form is given ultimacy. The Protestant principle is seen to be at work in both religion and culture to affirm "the majesty of the divine or holy itself overagainst any particular form in which it appears".¹²⁷ This principle is so crucial for Tillich's understanding of the human in relation to God, that he states bluntly "that God alone counts in the relationship of God and man".¹²⁸ The Protestant principle in fact is so designated because it "emphasizes the infinite distance between God and man" and demands the highest courage which accepts the fact that it is the sinful human being who is "the object of God's unconditional acceptance".¹²⁹ The distance is however not to be taken in any absolute sense because "separation" is always in tension with "participation". It is this conception of the divine-human relationship that makes Tillich appreciate the significance of Protestantism in the religion-and-culture encounter, and later in the religion-and-religion encounter.

The relation of Protestantism to the secular realm is the most positive, due to the Protestant principle that the sacred sphere is not nearer to the Ultimate than the secular sphere. It denies that either of them has a greater claim to

¹²⁶Tillich, *PE*, p.205.

¹²⁷Tillich, *ERQR*, p.74.

¹²⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.48.

¹²⁹Tillich, *TC*, p.68.

grace than the other; both are infinitely distant from and infinitely near to the Divine.¹³⁰

Thus the Protestant principle carries through the function of the larger concept of religion. We shall now consider briefly the way Tillich sees the Protestant principle's function in the history of religion.

Although the special articulation of the Protestant principle for contemporary Christianity has been offered more adequately in the Reformation, the basic idea that constitutes it is claimed by Tillich to be present in all concrete religions - in the sacramental types and in the mystical and prophetic types. Speaking from within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Tillich points out that the Protestant principle had expressed itself in the prophetic protest in Israel and in the Apostolic witness to Jesus as the Christ.¹³¹ In an earlier lecture series Tillich characterizes faith itself as including the element of protest ("Faith embraces itself and the doubt about itself.") and points out that the Protestant element precedes the Reformation, atleast in the case of Old Testament religion: "It [Faith] is Protestant by nature, whether it appears in Protestant or in biblical religion."¹³² So, it is for its theoretical form that the Protestant principle owes it to a rational or a doctrinal religion or "doctrinal school" in the first instance;¹³³ the practice of it is universal.

For the Protestant principle to exercise its critical power in a concrete religion, Tillich must presuppose the presence of the Protestant principle bearing the character of the holy as present in sacramental religion or in the higher religions. As an absolute principle that questions every form, the absolute must be present in the concrete so as to affirm two things: first, that it is not alien to any form, for every form belongs to it; and second, that it transcends every form. This two-fold character

¹³⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, p.47.

¹³¹Tillich, *ERQR*, 16.

¹³²Tillich, *BRSUR*, 61.

¹³³Tillich, *ERQR*, p.68.

gives the Protestant principle the power to question every relative claiming ultimacy. "Protestantism denies the security of sacramental systems with inviolable forms, sacred laws, eternal structures. It questions every claim of absoluteness; it remains dynamic even if it tries to become conservative."¹³⁴ The Protestant principle's task is bound up with judging every religious expression in terms of the "criterion of ultimacy". The history of religion is therefore judged, "not in terms of rejection but in terms of a yes and no".¹³⁵

The criterion contains a Yes - it does not reject any truth of faith in whatever form it may appear in the history of faith - and it contains a No - it does not accept any truth of faith as ultimate except the one that no man possesses it.¹³⁶

This would mean that holy objects can be mediums only in a "mediate sense"; they become idols the moment they are considered "inherently holy".¹³⁷ Thus the Protestant principle in relation to the religions proper and the quasi-religions is criticism of demonization. It is also "the criticism of the magical element in higher religions".¹³⁸ It is the critical principle that challenges religious authorities such as "infallible" decisions of a council, bishop or book.¹³⁹ It is the task of making sure that the content of faith is the really ultimate.¹⁴⁰ A concrete expression of the Protestant principle's criticism of a certain religious symbol is the emergence of one or more movements of criticism.¹⁴¹ So at no point should a symbol or an articulation of it be given finality: "creedal expressions of the ultimate concern of the community must include their own criticism".¹⁴² Tillich would say this for all religions, including for Christian doctrines, except perhaps for the Christ-symbol in relation to the cross. The

¹³⁴Tillich, *PE*, p.215.

¹³⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.96.

¹³⁶Tillich, *DF*, p.98.

¹³⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.216.

¹³⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.8.

¹³⁹Tillich, *DF*, p.28.

¹⁴⁰Tillich, *DF*, p.96.

¹⁴¹See Tillich, *ERQR*, p.67.

¹⁴²Tillich, *DF*, p.29.

discussion of the cross symbol might be appreciated better after seeing the significance that the Protestant principle receives in the light of Tillich's theory of religious symbols.

Religious symbols within a tradition constitute a language to express the ultimate concern or the content of the ultimate concern of the particular community. "Nothing *less than* symbols and myths can express our ultimate concern."¹⁴³ It is important to identify the basic character of the language of religious symbols from the "different languages" corresponding to "different approaches" to discussing the different "levels of reality of great difference".¹⁴⁴ Tillich states that the suggestion of religious symbols itself is a protest against the predominance of one form of language, namely that of the mathematical sciences.¹⁴⁵ The use of symbols is a recognition of the fact that every aspect of reality cannot be represented literally. With regard to the religious sphere in particular, every symbol has a two-fold function: it opens up the levels of reality on the one hand, and for the human person to grasp those levels it opens up the "levels of our interior reality" on the other hand.¹⁴⁶ A religious symbol is concrete¹⁴⁷ because it belongs to the cultural context of the particular community. This concreteness is also the reason for it to possess the power to reveal its own levels and to open up the levels of the believer's experience and thought. However, symbols are "not the same as that which they symbolize", but "participate in its meaning and power".¹⁴⁸

The symbol is concrete but becomes the bearer of the holy. So "holy objects are not holy in and of themselves. They are holy only by negating themselves in

¹⁴³Tillich, *DF*, 53. (Italics added)

¹⁴⁴Tillich, *TC*, p.54.

¹⁴⁵Tillich, *TC*, p.54.

¹⁴⁶Tillich, *TC*, p.57.

¹⁴⁷Tillich, *TC*, pp.57-58.

¹⁴⁸Tillich, *TC*, p.54.

pointing to the divine of which they are the mediums."¹⁴⁹ The inevitable fact that the concrete symbol has to represent the divine, which divine is its very source of being, the concrete symbol has to negate itself in some way.

The criterion of the truth of faith therefore, is that it implies an element of self-negation. That symbol is most adequate which expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy.¹⁵⁰

It is this truth that the Protestant principle expresses with respect to religious symbols. It "demonstrate[s] that nothing finite can ever express the ultimate in a literal or even in a concretely adequate way".¹⁵¹ A critical principle is necessary to suggest that a symbol should be transparent to the ultimate. Tillich states that such a critical approach to preserve the mediating character of the symbol is universal, and suggests that we

understand that a *critical principle* was and is at work in man's religious consciousness, namely, that which is really ultimate over against what claims to be ultimate but is only preliminary, transitory, finite.¹⁵²

The understanding of the Protestant principle, which we have seen in connection with Tillich's symbol theory and which is consistent with the Protestant principle's function in conjunction with the larger concept of religion, is the key to Tillich's special claim for the Christ-symbol in general and the cross-symbol in particular. This claim involves proclaiming Christ as the criterion for the judgment of Christianity and of all religions. He ends an article on religious language (which is basically an elaboration of his theory of religious symbols), showing how the cross-symbol performs the self-negation aspect of symbol thus:

If Christianity claims to have a truth superior to any other truth in its symbolism, then it is the symbol of the cross in which this is expressed, the cross of Christ. He who himself embodies the fullness of the divine's presence sacrifices himself in order not to become an idol, another god beside God, a

¹⁴⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.216.

¹⁵⁰Tillich, *DF*, 97.

¹⁵¹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.15.

¹⁵²Tillich, *DF*, p.10 (*italics added*).

god into whom the disciples wanted to make him. And therefore the decisive story is the story in which he accepts the title "Christ" when Peter offers it to him. He accepts it under the one condition that he has to go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, which means to deny the idolatrous tendency even with respect to himself. This is at the same time the criterion of all other symbols, and it is the criterion to which every Christian church should subject itself.¹⁵³

The cross-symbol, for Tillich, "expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy".¹⁵⁴ The significance of the cross is a self-negation of the finite Jesus: "Any acceptance of Jesus as the Christ which is not the acceptance of Jesus the crucified is a form of idolatry."¹⁵⁵ The cross testifies that Jesus resisted the temptation of accepting the Messiah symbol, which suggested a political revolutionary, in order to become the Messiah, which stood for one who was in "the most intimate relation to God" and who was "elected by God".¹⁵⁶ Two things can be noted here. First, there is Jesus's victory in not making the political end the ultimate end or the *telos* of life. Second, he seems to suggest the transparency to and participation in God is more important than the commitment to transforming one's political situation, or the world at large (although, as we have seen, transformation is religiously significant for prophetic religions and all other concrete religions).

The point that Tillich makes for the universal significance of the Christ in terms of the Protestant principle is not different from what we saw in the idea of final revelation (the Christ meeting the double test of finality). The following statement is crucial because it is said in relation to the question of the truth-value of a symbol: "A religious symbol possesses some truth if it adequately expresses the correlation of revelation in which some person stands. A religious symbol *is* true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation."¹⁵⁷ Here Tillich is

¹⁵³Tillich, *TC*, p.67.

¹⁵⁴Tillich, *DF*, p.97.

¹⁵⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.98.

¹⁵⁶Tillich, *UC*, pp.134-136.

¹⁵⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.240.

probably using the distinction between preliminary concern and ultimate concern to show the greater truth-value that the latter has over the former. Final revelation is actual revelation and hence it is the foundation of the religion concerned (Jesus the Christ in the case of Christianity). The Christ is the ultimate concern of the one who has accepted this revelation, and hence sees the Christ answer as having universal significance. And what has universal significance *is truth*, overagainst a preliminary concern which has limited significance and hence only *possesses truth*.

Finally, we must consider what light is thrown by the Protestant principle on Tillich's theology of religions. The Protestant principle as expressed in the symbol of the Christ is an affirmation of the symbol-character of the symbol, which means that it cannot be absolutized. This point is expressed well by Cantwell Smith recently in terms of the difference between idol and idolatry in his article, "Idolatry" in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*. Idol, for him, is a symbol of religious truth and is essential for religious life in a positive way. Contrarily, idolatry is the claim of the absolute validity of the idol. Tillich sees "a *permanent* conflict between the basic meaning and the actuality of religion",¹⁵⁸ the conflict being caused by the concrete symbols of ultimacy claiming to be ultimate themselves. It is the Protestant principle that shows the concrete and relative character of the religious symbol in order that a self-limitation of the symbol is accepted. The religious symbol is both relative to the reality or truth it expresses; and it is also relative to its cultural context. In this way, Protestant principle expresses a pluralist stance.

But the judging function of the Protestant principle raises the question of the basis of judgment. Tillich seems to suggest that the Protestant principle has no basis apart from itself. It is its own criterion. The fact that it is to function discriminately with yes and no is positive as compared to Barth's absolute no. But how does the

¹⁵⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.14 (italics added).

Protestant principle offer its yes and no in concrete situations as the concrete itself takes shape from the preceding situation? How do we from our concrete standpoints know the Protestant principle's yes and no? The criterion that Tillich offers, as we shall now see, is not an absolute theological or philosophical standpoint. On the contrary, the method of starting from one's concrete standpoint and engaging in an interpretative process of showing the significance of one's own religion in the light of the symbols or concepts of other religions might be suggested as the critical-creative approach implied in the Protestant principle.

This critical-creative approach surpasses the idea of mere self-criticism that Tillich sometimes highlights in the Protestant principle, as in instances when he uses the symbol of the cross. More than self-criticism is demanded for a sustainable pluralism. It has to affirm adequately the validity of the truth of one's own religion, the validity of the truth proclaimed by other religions and the significance of another's truth for one as is one's truth for the other. This is the concern of pluralism not becoming a relativism. For Tillich, the Protestant principle helps in maintaining the validity of the various living symbols in two ways. First, it preserves the symbols from being reduced in significance in a process of secularization or profanization. Just as idolatry or demonization which happens due to absolutization has to be resisted by the Protestant principle, the same principle has to resist profanization which arises due to indifference to the absolute.¹⁵⁹ Hence the importance of the criticism from the vertical. Second, the Protestant principle, according to Tillich, has a "decisive word" to say to the encountering religions, although he makes it clear that the Protestant principle "is not identical with any particular religion, not even Protestantism".¹⁶⁰ This might be seen in the fact of his suggestion that the protest that the Protestant principle

¹⁵⁹For Tillich, the "ambiguity of religion" threatens every genuine religious act as *profanization* and *demonization* (Tillich, *ST III*, p.105).

¹⁶⁰Tillich, *ERQR*, p.3.

pronounces is concrete and contains both affirmations and negations. "There is no 'absolute' negation and there is no 'absolute' protest - absolute in the literary sense of 'absolved from any involvement.'"¹⁶¹ Tillich's ontology affirms the presence of the universal in the particular. Hence the universal both affirms forms and breaks through forms, as we saw under "Religion and Culture".

But is Tillich justified and is there not an element of absolutism when he begins to look for "one" symbol which will express ultimacy adequately? "And whether one of these symbols is adequate or not depends on how near it comes to ultimacy itself."¹⁶² Is ultimacy dependent on the nature or complexity of a symbol, or is it dependent more on the internal way in which a person within a theological circle is related to the ultimate? Tillich does not address this directly. However, two relevant answers might be identified. The first is Tillich's argument that the personal symbol is the best to express the divine-human encounter, the revelatory situation and the meaning of salvation as the reunion of estranged being with essential being. This betrays a special preference for the revelation in Jesus the Christ. Tillich asks: "*What* is the most adequate expression of ultimacy?" And answers: "We ourselves claim, for instance, that the Christian message, or the event on which Christianity is based, is the purest form in which ultimacy has appeared."¹⁶³ As we have noted before, Tillich does qualify his answer by referring to his own theological circle ("We ourselves"). This answer is not enough, for it does not give any indication of the ground from which other religions can claim the possibility a symbol expressing ultimacy. It might be asked of Tillich: Is ultimacy not intimated by one's participation in the religious symbol of one's own theological circle, whatever the symbol? A generally accepted pluralist answer would be an affirmation of ultimacy as a possibility for an individual

¹⁶¹Tillich, *PE*, p.206.

¹⁶²Tillich, *ERQR*, p.14.

¹⁶³Tillich, *UC*, p.22.

or group on the basis of their respective religious symbols. This general answer can even lay hold of Tillich's idea of "fragmentary" realization of salvation in history, and state: Since the salvific experience is fragmentary anyway, it is modest and realistic to claim only that each person or group experiences different processes of transformation relative to the symbol and the forces and concerns present in the concrete situation. Tillich's answer would take account of this point regarding the fragmentary realization. But in respect of Protestant principle's role in theological criticism, which includes theological construction, a critical evaluation is essential.

This leads us to the second point, which has reference to Tillich's fundamental definition of religion as ultimate concern. As we have seen, ultimate concerns are different for different groups and for individuals in predominantly secular societies. But some ultimate concerns can be proved by theological criticism to be only preliminary. Religions can sanctify or sacramentalize such preliminary concerns. The task of the Protestant principle is to identify the concerns which are not truly ultimate. Christianity is not exempt from this criticism. For instance, Protestantism must be aware that its "acceptance of secularism can lead to a slow elimination of the religious dimension altogether".¹⁶⁴ So the Protestant principle "is the principle of putting oneself under the same judgment under which one puts others."¹⁶⁵ In connection with the Protestant principle Tillich claims that self-critical function is greater in the ethical type of religion.. And gives the Old Testament example in which Yahweh, who declares himself the God of justice, emphasizes that justice is universal and makes his judgment first on Israel and only subsequently on Egypt, Babylon, Assyria or Tyre and Sidon.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, p.48.

¹⁶⁵Tillich, *ERQR*, p.55. Also: Standing "under the cross" means "divine judgement over man's religious life, and even over Christianity" (Tillich, *DF*, p.29).

¹⁶⁶Tillich, *ERQR*, p.25.

This fact that the Protestant principle has the believer's own religion as the starting point and then interprets one's symbols in universal terms shows a close similarity between the Protestant principle and Critical phenomenology. Perhaps they differ in emphasis: the Protestant principle being primarily concerned with the concrete and the critical; and Critical phenomenology being concerned with the universal and the constructive. Essentially, both propose

to penetrate into the depth of one's own religion, in devotion, thought and action. In the depth of every living religion there is a point at which the religion itself loses its importance, and that to which it points breaks through its particularity, elevating it to spiritual freedom and with it to a vision of the spiritual presence in other expressions of the meaning of man's existence.¹⁶⁷

The theological task is inadequate if the depth of religion, or the universal character of religion which expresses the meaning of human existence, is not reached. But this point of depth is not reached by logical deductions, nor by any leap of faith, nor by accepting a dogma given by authority. This depth is reached by a concrete engagement with one's situation in terms of the central symbol(s) of one's faith. It is the Protestant principle that addresses both the concrete and the universal.

Theology still has no more important task than to express the Protestant protest radically and penetratingly in its own doctrinal work and in its dealing with every aspect of contemporary life. It must issue the protest unconditionally because of the unconditional character of the divine, and it must express it concretely because of the concrete character of every historical situation.¹⁶⁸

This character of the Protestant principle gives it an almost permanent place in the theological task because it plays a vital role in the theological task: "For a long time to come - and in some way always - the Protestant protest must have priority."¹⁶⁹ For Tillich the saving function of the cross of Christ does not follow one's belief in its

¹⁶⁷Tillich, *CEWR*, p.97.

¹⁶⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.207.

¹⁶⁹Tillich, *PE*, p.207.

efficacy but rather is experienced in one's and a community's being open to the ultimate judgment of the Protestant principle on both the concrete situation and the securities and distortions of the religio-sacramental sphere: "A particular religion will be lasting to the degree in which it negates itself as a religion. Thus Christianity will be a bearer of the religious answer as long as it breaks through its own particularity."¹⁷⁰ The paradox of the Protestant principle is perhaps the greatest in the area of comparative theology, for what is designated narrowly as 'Protestant' is in fact a principle of universal value.

We conclude by pointing out that the Protestant principle as self-criticism is an important pluralist norm, which we have seen fulfilled by Tillich, but arguing that although other religions may not have their central symbols suggesting self-criticism as it is in the way Tillich interprets the Christ-symbol, it is wrong on Tillich's part to disregard possible examples, statements and arguments in the literature and religious self-understanding of the different religions about self-criticism of one's standpoint in the name of the ultimate. Thus, however inadequate, the point in the Indian story of the blind men's varying impressions of the elephant is the criticism that must be directed against each concrete perception. Also self-criticisms have been made in different periods of a religion's history based on the demands of the historical situation. However, a Tillichian argument might be made for the special character of the Christ-symbol on the basis of a unique or "superior" character of a *dialectical approach*. On the one hand the Christ reveals God; on the other hand the Christ points back to the mystery. On the one hand we participate in the Christ as the answer; on the other hand we are judged by the Christ. In this sense, Christology in terms of the Protestant principle expresses the basic character of theology, that is, a dialectical relationship between theological construction and theological criticism,

¹⁷⁰Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.96-97.

where theological construction is done on the basis of the elements present in the religious and cultural spheres, and theological criticism is offered in the name of the ultimate.

We shall now proceed to the next part and chapter to appreciate the dialectical approach that characterizes Tillich's theological method in more systematic terms. This will help in seeing the scope of Tillich's method for a pluralistic theology, although the actual task will be that of identifying the special character of Tillich's pluralism.

PART C

THEOLOGICAL METHOD AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Part A dealt with Tillich's broad theological definition of religion, and identified and discussed common features of the concrete religions which were found to be differently expressed in those religions. It emerged that the larger definition and the concrete religious expressions threw light on each other, and hence theology needed to attend to both sides. A *common basis* in terms of ultimate concern and the nature of the holy were identified in Chapters I and II respectively, and the *forms of the expression* of ultimate concern and the holy in the same religion and in the various religions were shown as an open, objective approach to the religions, with no special standing for Christianity *a priori*.

In Part B the question of Tillich's theology of religions was approached more directly by examining his criticisms of absolutism and relativism and by suggesting his position as transcending absolutist universalism and relativist universalism. To argue that this position is a form of pluralism, the basic *criteria* which Tillich used to understand the nature of religious experience particularly with reference to Christianity, namely, revelation, the idea of God, the Christ and the Protestant principle, were discussed. The fact of Tillich's attempt to present these as *formal criteria* rather than as special for a supposedly absolute religion was observed. Hence his pluralism was affirmed.

Now in Part C, we discuss Tillich's method of correlation to show the pluralist character of affirming other religions and worldviews and the inclusivist character of critically using other methods of analysis and drawing from other religions. The basic approach of dialectically working from one's own concrete standpoint and appreciating other standpoints is the basis for designating Tillich's pluralism dialectical pluralism.

CHAPTER V

THE METHOD OF CORRELATION

Method in connection with a discipline concerns the process by which an understanding of a particular reality is attained. As the particular reality in question, including reality as a whole as the object of enquiry, is usually informed by previous approaches to it and assessments of its nature and value, one is immediately faced with the fact of a plurality of methods - each method grasping the particular reality differently or each method throwing light on a special facet of the particular reality. In regard to the religious reality with which this study is concerned, and given the fact that for Tillich religion is universal and yet appreciated concretely, the method that is adequate will be one which is critical. Here critical means that the method adopted is not proposed as a unique method which is new and independent of all earlier approaches and which grasps the reality concerned fully or most adequately. Resisting such attempts at superiority, the critical method determines the limits of the various methods by correlating the available methods with the special facet of the reality it illuminates. In this way, the critical method uses most of the methods, but after removing any claims of exclusiveness. To what extent Tillich's theological method validates a plurality of methods by showing their mutual significance will now be examined.

As we shall see, Tillich attaches great importance to method in theology, and demands an open method. Paul Avis refers to Tillich's warning against imperialistic methods which have "an innate tendency to 'muscle in' on areas to which they are unsuited", and suggests that "[t]heological method must ... avoid becoming an end in itself; it must retain the capacity to be self-critical and self-correcting, remaining open

to new knowledge and fresh insights, open-ended, flexible, versatile".¹ Method must be developed from reality, or rather it "is an element of the reality itself".²

Reality itself makes demands, and method must follow; reality offers itself in different ways, and our cognitive intellect must receive it in different ways. An exclusive method applied to everything closes many ways of approach and impoverishes our vision of reality.³

In respect of theology, then, Tillich proposed the "method of correlation" as an attempt to explain "the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence".⁴ His argument for its validity is the theological fact of the divine-human relation: "The divine-human relation is a correlation."⁵ That is, humans ask the question of God when they try to understand themselves, for their existence drives them towards God from whom they are separated. And they answer the question about themselves in terms of the answers from God, who alone is their essential basis. So basically:

"The method of correlation requires that every part of my system should include one section in which the question is developed by an analysis of human existence generally, and one section in which the theological answer is given on the basis of the sources, the medium, and the norm of systematic theology"⁶

Clayton has shown that a questioning-answering correlation and a form-content correlation are present in Tillich's discussions in *ST* and that they have their basis in his religion-culture correlation.⁷ He finds each sub-correlation wanting in itself and even together.

Although it might satisfy the reciprocity condition, 'questioning and answering' is by itself too shapeless to be an adequate model of relationship; and, although it might satisfy the autonomy condition, the dialectic of 'form and content' as developed in Tillich's later writings on correlation cannot be

¹Paul Avis, *The Methods of Modern Theology: The Dream of Reason*, Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1986, p.207.

²Tillich, *ST I*, p.60

³Tillich, *PTTB*, p.128.

⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.60.

⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.61; see also *ibid.*, pp.62-3.

⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.66.

⁷J. P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, pp.155-249 (esp. pp.155-160).

regarded on its own as sufficiently dialectical to satisfy the reciprocity condition.⁸

Clayton is right in what he is positive about in each of the two models, but wrong about the respective condition each model fails to fulfil. Shapelessness in a conversation model such as question-answer is more a strength than a weakness. As we shall soon see, there are no fixed questions and fixed answers. Although for Tillich the Christian message is eternal, it is not received in a fixed rational proposition. The answer is given in relation to the contemporary situation and the interpretation(s) of existence present in it. Clayton's demand of the form-content correlation to satisfy the reciprocity condition goes against the very basis of the form-content correlation. This correlation, which is almost identical with the religion-culture correlation, as Clayton himself recognizes⁹, suggests a transcendence-immanence relation between religious substance and cultural form, as we saw in Chapter I; it is not a reciprocal relation. The transcendence-immanence relation represents a vertical relationship, which is an internal participation of substance and form in each other. As substance and form are not apart from each other or alongside each other (as in the case of the relationship between two human beings) there is in principle no possibility of reciprocity. Also Clayton's synonymous use of reciprocity and dialecticality in this connection needs to be corrected. In regard to substance and form, substance relates to form dialectically with a yes and no, according to Tillich, as seen before. Form manifests the substance; it has the potential to renew itself in the power of the substance to become a more adequate symbol; it has the potential to be emptied of the substance to become profane; and it also has the tendency to raise itself to ultimacy to become demonic. In a lesser way, form too can also make a yes and no response to substance, but this response does not have judging power in a way equal to that of substance. So dialecticality is included, but reciprocity is excluded in the content-form correlation.

⁸J. P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, p.159.

⁹J. P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, p.191.

Here we proceed to discuss Tillich's method of correlation not as it applies to Tillich's system consisting of five parts with five questions from the human side to which the respective divine answers are correlated, but in relation to three *analytical processes* that we identify.¹⁰ They too are correlations. Two of them are explicit in Tillich's discussion of theological method: kerygma and situation, and philosophy and theology. The former refers to the existential situation of the theologian, participating at once in the community of faith and in the wider culture, in the sacred and the secular, in the theological circle and outwith it. This means that the theologian has to ask for the kerygma through a concrete interpretation of existence from within the given cultural context, and show what the response from the kerygma is. The second correlation, that of philosophy and theology has a similarity with the first in that the question-answer pattern is preserved. But in the second, a higher or universal framework for theology is sought. Ontology with its ontological principles and concepts is regarded by Tillich to provide theology the tools to speak in universal terms. This theology must take up, without bypassing or abandoning at any stage, the existential and concrete character that the first correlation demands.

A third correlation, that between the systematic and the historical, is present in all of Tillich's writings, particularly in his *Systematic Theology*. As he is writing systematic theology and not a history of Christianity or a history of religions, he only uses examples of the historical. Nevertheless his systematic is informed by the historical. This correlation is what Tillich suggested as the basis of the *new task of systematic theology* in his last public lecture - "new" not in a qualitative sense, but in the extent of treatment. In all the three correlations, to what extent Tillich's analyses

¹⁰The three correlations we identify do not correspond directly to the three elements that Tillich proposes as essential for theological construction, but they do in some way cover all the three elements, which are: the Christ-event being the *content* of theology, the rational element determining the *form* of theology, and the element of immediacy or experience of ultimacy provides the *medium* of theology. (Tillich, *PTTB*, p.135)

show the mutuality of the two sides of the correlations without one of the sides dominating the other will be appreciated. Whether the systematic and the historical approaches in the study of religion are appreciated in their own right by Tillich and whether his suggestion of the interpenetration of the two promising mutual developments is viable will be discussed. And finally, what sort of pluralism emerges from the study as a whole will be presented and its adequacy evaluated.

1. Kerygma and Situation

The theologian has a two-fold existential engagement, for Tillich. The one is with the *kerygma*: "a person can be a theologian as long as he acknowledges the content of the theological circle as his ultimate concern".¹¹ The other is with the *situation*, which is not "the psychological or sociological state in which individuals or groups live. It refers to the scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which they express their interpretation of existence".¹² If attention is paid exclusively to discovering the "eternal message" within the Bible and tradition to counter a distorted tradition as Luther and Barth had done, then the theology fails to be adequate to the situation. If only the situation is addressed without bringing the eternal message to bear upon it, then "theology would lose itself in the relativities of the "situation"; it would become a "situation" itself".¹³ So kerygmatic theology, which emphasizes the eternal message, does not accept common ground with the situation, fearing that it will lose its own ground by entering the situation. And secular theologians draw out the kerygma from the situation and thereby lack a higher criterion to evaluate the situation. Working exclusively from one side of the

¹¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.10.

¹²Tillich, *ST I*, pp.3-4.

¹³Tillich, *ST I*, p.5.

correlation being thus inadequate, Tillich calls for "a theological method in which message and situation are related in such a way that neither of them is obliterated".¹⁴

It is this working from both sides that makes a theological system open to new insights and to revision, unlike a kerygmatic theology which reproduces "the content of the Christian message in an ordered and systematic way".¹⁵ But even kerygmatic theology is done in a situation and addressing the situation with the aim of transforming it. It is in the way that the Christian message is presented that it takes a stand in opposition to the situation and to culture. And this theology also makes use of philosophical terms and methods (which belong to the situation), which Barth acknowledged, though not his fanatical pupils.¹⁶ Apologetic theology demands the concreteness of participating in one's own religious tradition and outwith it, namely the situation. This two-fold concreteness, which we now consider, will show Tillich's two-fold commitment: the one to grasp the eternal message relevant to the situation, and the other to renew and develop symbols in response to the situation.

Kerygma, or the Christian message, presupposes the theologian's positive relationship with the concrete religion to which s/he belongs.

The participation in a religious reality is a presupposition of all theology. You have to be within the circle of a concrete religion in order to interpret it existentially. This is the "theological circle" which theology cannot (and never should try to) escape. This circle is not vicious, but its denial is dishonest, for it could be denied only in the name of an assumedly higher ultimate, which immediately would establish the same circle.¹⁷

Tillich's emphasis on the existential-critical element which we observed in our discussion under "Christ the Criterion" corresponds to his demand for the existential character of theology encountered here. By this participation in the circle the

¹⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.8.

¹⁵Tillich, *PE*, p.84.

¹⁶Tillich, *PE*, p.84; See Tillich, *PTTB*, p.129.

¹⁷Tillich, *PTTB*, p.131.

theologian avoids the danger of overlooking important phenomena of the religious heritage through which the Christian message could be better expressed. However it is not just mere familiarity with what is of value in the community of faith that is important. Rather faith is more actual and with content in a community of faith:

The religious language, the language of symbol and myth, is created in the community of the believers and cannot be fully understood outside this community. But within it, the religious language enables the act of faith to have a concrete content.¹⁸

Although this participation in a religion is important, the kerygma is not to be identified with the creedal formulations of the religion, including Christianity. The community witnesses to the fact of the kerygma or the the Word which comes from beyond and becomes "immanent, creating a divine structure of reality", in a person and in the community of faith.¹⁹ Here we have the unconditional character of the kerygma connected with its conditioned, concrete form.

It is the failure to recognize this double-aspect of the kerygma that a theology becomes narrow and exclusivist. Here the role of symbols comes into the discussion. If God and the Christ, as we saw earlier, could only be expressed through symbols, then it follows that the kerygma, which points to them, in its representative function is basically a set of symbols but with some rational interpretation. And under religious symbol, Tillich includes myths, dogmas and modern philosophical interpretations of the ultimate and religion, as we shall see.

Three aspects of Tillich's understanding of the religious symbol relevant to the discussion of the kerygma and its relation to the situation will now be recalled to appreciate Tillich's pluralism. The first is the point that the holy as the object of one's ultimate concern can only be expressed in terms of symbols. The way symbols come

¹⁸Tillich, *DF*, p.24. The community of faith cannot offer the content of faith in a creedal statement (*ibid.*) which a secular theologian can grasp from outwith the circle.

¹⁹Tillich, *PE*, p.210.

to represent the holy for a particular group depends on the group's experiences and the different and increasingly self-aware and scientific ways of accounting those experiences. So on the one hand each group in its history would have had symbols preserved over a long period of time and lost some when new ones become more true to their concrete experience. On the other hand there will be differences and yet not without some structural similarities between the religious symbols of one group and another. The relation of kerygma to situation is evident in this statement of one aspect of the religious symbol. The kerygma is *preserved* through its many forms. The two main forms of symbols are the sacramental and conceptual, the former being characteristic of earlier periods and the latter being characteristic of the present time, although the conceptual element is not absent in the sacramental symbol and the sacramental not absent in the conceptual. In Tillich's religious typology we saw the sacramental being the basis of the mystical and the ethical religions. This insight can be seen to have two implications for his theory of symbols. The one is that all religious symbols have a sacramental character, which means that each points to the holy. The conceptual element is implicit, for even sacramental religions include conceptions of reality as a whole and some understanding of the proper actions within the consecrated universe. The other implication for his theory of symbols is that though the sacramental symbols are fundamental, the conceptual symbols are higher. Whereas sacramental symbols are aimed at reinforcing cult and ritual with some concept of identity, prosperity and growth, conceptual symbols such as equality, justice and community bear the sacramental element of the holy's presence in each of these concept-forms and their forms of realization.

This leads to the second point from Tillich's symbol theory, which is that a religious symbol in virtue of its connection not only with the conscious actions of the group but with the "collective unconscious" it will live as long as the group manages to adapt the symbol or kerygma to the new situation without losing its substance. Not

just affecting the intellect but the total human person, symbols open up deeper levels of reality and special levels in the human soul. It is this character of symbol that saves symbols from being replaced by other symbols. The "group unconscious" or the "collective unconscious" is related to the symbol such that it sees the group's very being in the symbol. A symbol dies only when the inner situation of the group changes, when it no longer produces a response in the group.²⁰ The Christian kerygma has both the sacramental and conceptual character. This is expressed in the forms: "Logos has become flesh" or "Jesus is the Christ". These are not meaningful in themselves unless they are borne witness to in the community and through the sacraments of the Church. Tillich states: "Jesus is the Christ" is the "fundamental dogma. All other Christian dogmas have a supporting and protective role".²¹ The fundamental dogma is the Christian kerygma and the dogmas that interpret this have been and must be developed by being responsive to the situation and its conceptual forms. In other words, the theologian's enquiry is directed towards the concrete logos which is experienced through the medium of the church,²² and at the same time the enquiry results in the expression of the kerygma such that the kerygma is *protected* from being lost in the situation.

It is this idea of the protective function of the dogma that makes Tillich see some gap between the kerygma and its proper expression in the history of Christianity. "The whole history of Christian dogma is a continuous narrowing down, but at the same time a *defining*."²³ The narrowing is seen by Tillich to be necessary for maintaining the church's very identity. Though Tillich makes this narrowing down as a general statement, the four examples that he gives relate to periods of intense

²⁰Tillich, *TC*, pp.56-58; Tillich, *DF*, pp.41-43. A symbol is 'adequate' only as long as it expresses "an ultimate concern in such a way that it creates reply, action, communication" (Tillich, *DF*, p.96).

²¹Tillich, *UC*, p.88.

²²Tillich, *STI*, 23-4.

²³Tillich, *UC*, 65. Also see *ibid.*, 62-6.

confrontations (Barth against the Nazi, the Roman church against the Renaissance, the Reformation against the Roman church and the Counter Reformation against Protestantism). This means that the narrowing down happens when absolutist tendencies are challenged in the name of the kerygma. Tillich may be right in so far as theologies of individuals such as Barth are concerned, when everything human is subjected to the divine instead of seeing the human and the divine in a correlation. But to say that a narrowing down is happening to all theologies in a period such as Luther's and Calvin's (whom Tillich commends for a certain method of correlation) and to every attempt of the Church is to contradict his own claim that dogmas play a supportive function in relation to the fundamental dogma. If Tillich had used "protective" only in the limited sense of defining the Christ dogma such that it is free from ambiguities that the religious or secular ideas of the situation threatened it with, then our charge is invalid. Tillich points out that while dogmas affirm something, they also reject something. For instance the positive statement of God's creatorship in the Apostle's creed is at the same time the negation of dualism. Protective dogmas arose to challenge new doctrines that seemed to distort the fundamental Christian substance. The negative character becomes more evident in later dogmas.²⁴ And Tillich sees the necessity of philosophy to give more accurate theoretical formulations to protective dogmas, which were themselves prone to misinterpretation.²⁵ (The discussion of the Correlation of Philosophy and Theology is thus anticipated.) It appears that Tillich saw the attempts of the Church in developing dogmas purely in negative terms. When he observed that dogmas both *preserve* and *conceal*,²⁶ did he simply think of a preservation of dogma as simply an identity-affirming act of the Church, or also as concerned with a proper *revealing* of the dogma? Certainly, as we saw under Universalism, Tillich saw the early Church developing its concepts by a

²⁴Tillich, *HCT*,xiv.

²⁵Tillich, *HCT*,xiv.

²⁶Tillich, *UC*,66.

positive correlation of kerygma and situation. We might suggest that Tillich's evaluation of the history of dogma as a narrowing down needs to be qualified or totally challenged on the basis of further research.

The revealing character of the dogma leads to the third aspect of the religious symbol. The third aspect is in fact a logical consequence of and a fuller statement of the first. The first aspect stated that the holy can be expressed through finite symbols (and hence that the holy is immanent in them). The third aspect is that of the symbol expressing the fact of the ultimate transcending the form infinitely, which can only be done by "an element of self-negation. That symbol is most adequate which expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy."²⁷ We have already seen that in Christianity the Christ, the Cross and the Protestant principle are symbols which negate themselves in addition to pointing to their ground. These symbols are special in that they resist any literal interpretation of symbols. They perform the important function of a religious criticism of religion, for according to Tillich rational or scientific criticism cannot create or criticize the truth of religion, and hence of myth or symbols. Thus he attacks the "reactive literalism" of those within the theological circle, for their literal interpretation of symbols. These people fail to seek the truth honestly and prefer to repress the questions raised by their questioning minds, invoking the authority of the Church or the Bible, to losing their certainty.²⁸ A literal interpretation of a symbol for Tillich is idolatry. Whitehead makes the same point in relation to dogmas.²⁹ According to Tillich, it is the self-negating function of the symbol that gives it universal significance, which we have shown to be absolutist if Tillich had meant that *only* Jesus the Christ met the condition for it, although had Tillich carried through his project of setting up *formal criteria* through his critical

²⁷Tillich, *DF*, p.97.

²⁸Tillich, *DF*, pp.52-53.

²⁹"Idolatry is the necessary product of static dogmas." (A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, New York: Macmillan, 1926, p.147)

phenomenology and through the Protestant principle, he would have held on to a pluralist position consistently.

All the three aspects of the religious symbol together affirm the character of symbols as forms or mediums, as relative to people, time and situation, and as the definitive character of true symbols. Cantwell Smith is in agreement with the first two aspects of the religious symbol but not the third aspect in the above discussion when he points out that "every religious symbol in whatever tradition can mean different things, at different levels, to various men" and hence any interpretation of the symbol "must be suggestive rather than conclusive".³⁰ Whereas Smith speaks about symbols being unique and perhaps more inclusive and consequently the need to refrain from any definitive interpretation of them, Tillich on the one hand would emphasize the symbol as definitive for the believer in the revelatory situation, not by acquiring any special meaning but in revealing the religious substance by negating itself, and on the other hand would see the need for this revelation to be received by the situation in terms of its questions. We will now address the question of the importance of the importance of the situation in relation to the theologian's task.

With reference to his own time, especially as far as the Western context was concerned, Tillich thought that the Christian symbols were still around, although not in terms of their power to draw everyone into a revelatory correlation. But at the same time, he did not think that secular symbols could totally replace the religious ones. And hence he pointed out that symbols of the present cannot be said to be dead easily if they are still accepted (even by a certain section) because they might be "dormant" and hence "capable of being reawakened".³¹ For Tillich, science has no power to replace religious symbols, and the theologian on his part should not

³⁰W.C. Smith, *The Faith of Other Men*, p.43.

³¹Tillich, *DF*, p.97.

advocate to the situation as to which religious symbols are appropriate. "Theology as such has neither the duty nor the power to confirm or negate religious symbols. Its task is to interpret them according to theological principles and methods."³² In performing this interpretative task, theology identifies inadequate symbols on the one hand and plays a definite prophetic role in religion by demanding a new revelatory situation on the other. Only a new revelatory situation can replace the preceding one.

Tillich does not restrict the revelatory situation to the Church. The situation and culture have a religious element. The prophetic voices are there in culture, in those who can be considered as part of the "latent Church", which is "a Church in which the ultimate concern which drives the manifest Church is hidden under cultural forms and deformations".³³ "The Church and culture are within, not alongside, each other. And the Kingdom of God includes both while transcending both."³⁴ This mutual participation of Church and situation justifies Tillich's claim that Christian symbols are still not dead. This mutual influence can also be seen as the basis of Tillich's suggestion in one of his seminars that the visual arts, drama, poetry and the novel could offer "fresh interpretations of the Christian symbols".³⁵

An analysis of this mutual engagement between Christianity and the situation as an essential part of Tillich's theological enterprise is also a reason for his being considered a pluralist. The present reality of the visibility of the presence of many religions in the situation should from a Tillichian standpoint receive serious attention. But this will be done in the last section of this chapter, after we have appreciated here how he considers the situation generally as important for theology, and after we have

³²Tillich, *ST I*, p.240.

³³Tillich, *ST I*,51.

³⁴Tillich, *TC*,51.

³⁵Tillich, *UC*,40.

considered the importance of philosophy and history for the theological enterprise in the next two sections respectively.

Tillich's consistent commitment to doing a "theology of culture" is an expression of his addressing the situation. Theology of culture analyzes "the theology behind all cultural expressions".³⁶ This process involves the theologian going beyond her/his theological circle, for committed as s/he is to the *logos* structure of what concerns the her/him ultimately,³⁷ this should be reflected on in the light of the *logos* expressed in the various cultural forms. The theologian should press on beyond the tradition with a yes and no in terms of the universal *logos*. This makes the task of the theologian of culture "analytic rather than synthetic, historical rather than systematic."³⁸ In carrying out this specific theological analysis, the theologian of culture also engages with and draws from the various analyses of human existence from other cultural disciplines: "The analysis of the human situation employs materials made available by man's creative self-interpretation in all realms of culture."³⁹ In addition to gaining from such analytical and critical approaches, Tillich also focusses his attention on the special movements of the situation which present the *kairos* for a new order or fellowship that would operate through churches and cultural and political movements, taking the "form of resistance against the distortion of humanity and divinity which necessarily is connected with the rise of the new systems of authority".⁴⁰

With every major change in the situation, the appropriate analysis of the situation should determine the way the kerygma provides the answer. The present situation varies from the early Greek church's "question about finitude, of death and

³⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.39.

³⁷Tillich, *STI*, p.25.

³⁸Tillich, *ST I*, p.39.

³⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.63.

⁴⁰Tillich, *PE*, p.232.

error", or from the Reformation's "question of a merciful God and the forgiveness of sins". Tillich saw the question of his time as self-estrangement being overcome to create "a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning, and hope."⁴¹ Two main answers, from opposing poles, were observed by Tillich to answer the culture characterized by the spirit of industrialism. Supranaturalism was seen to *resist* the industrial spirit, for which it used categories taken from naturalism and created a supernatural above the natural. Its mistake was that of interpreting doctrine, cult and life of the past in literal terms. Liberal theology was seen to offer the other answer, which it did by *adapting* itself to the industrial age by reinterpreting traditional symbols in contemporary terms, but lost its message and ability to judge culture in the process.⁴² Supranaturalism only said "no" to the culture from above culture. Liberalism said yes but from within culture. Against the inadequacies of these, Tillich found Existentialism offering a religious judgment of culture from within culture: "protest[ing] against the spirit of industrial society within the framework of industrial society". It pointed out that industrial society's "experiences of emptiness and meaninglessness, of dehumanization and estrangement" are the result of humans having become part of the reality created by them, having become means to ends which are themselves means. However the idea of an ultimate end is lacking in Existentialism.⁴³ By a dialogue with such a philosophy that interprets the situation adequately, a theology of culture serves as a "creative source for systematic theology".⁴⁴

⁴¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.49.

⁴²Tillich, *TC*, p.45. Supranatural theology places God in a realm beyond the natural one as a transcendent object. For Tillich this is a conditioning of the unconditional, relegating God to a different realm and God's decisive acts to different times (creation, redemption, consummation), thereby making God no more a matter of ultimate concern. (See Tillich, *PE*, p.82)

⁴³Tillich, *TC*, pp.45-46.

⁴⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.40.

Though Tillich has applied his kerygma-situation correlation to good use in his analysis of the relation between Christianity and culture, the claims that he makes for Apologetic theology in respect of other religions betrays a certain superiority. Instead of putting forward a formal principle of the answer being present in but not determining the question of the situation, which could be claimed as true in the case of all religions, Tillich seems to suggest that the Christian answer is the *only* proper answer to questions arising from all situations and cultures. Other answers too are superceded by the Christian answer.

Apologetic theology must show that trends which are immanent in all religions and cultures move toward the Christian answer. This refers both to doctrines and to the theological interpretation of theology.⁴⁵

Tillich's imperative for Apologetic theology is understandable in the light of the meaninglessness of the situation which needs to be addressed with a *concrete* answer. And since he sees this meaninglessness as a universal condition, he is enthusiastic about providing a *universal* answer. He finds the Christian kerygma offering such an answer, one which is universal and concrete at the same time, in the Logos doctrine: the "Logos who has become flesh". Through a subtle philosophical argument he shows that the universal Logos, which is not an abstract concept, is also concrete in every particular instance.

Only that which has the power of representing everything particular is absolutely concrete. And only that which has the power of representing everything abstract is absolutely universal. This leads to a point where the absolutely concrete and the absolutely universal are identical.⁴⁶

Tillich's idealist tendency makes him propose one unambiguous instance which would be true for all other ambiguous realizations. This unambiguous-ambiguous relation is true both for the Christ's relation to the realizations of individuals and of religious

⁴⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.15.

⁴⁶Tillich, *ST I*, pp.16-17.

traditions. Christian theology is *the* theology because it represents an unambiguous union of the universal and the concrete in the Christ.

Christian theology is *the* theology in so far as it is based on the tension between the absolutely concrete and the absolutely universal. Priestly and prophetic theologies can be very concrete, but they lack universality. Mystical and metaphysical theologies can be very universal, but they lack concreteness.⁴⁷

There is an element of exclusiveness about the Christian answer here. But it cannot serve as a basis for regarding Tillich as an absolutist given Tillich's correlational approach based on his ontological-existential framework. Ontology suggests that there *definitely are* answers to existential questions. And he wants to identify the Christ as the way of closing the gap between *question for answer*, from the side of humans, and *answer to question* from the side of God. So Tillich is actually working to meet the methodological demands of his framework, which of course has consequences for his theology of religions, rather than showing that Christianity has any factual content that makes it superior to other religions. This is evident in his statement that "the assertion of faith that in Jesus Christ the Logos has become flesh" *cannot be proved but only accepted*. The Jesus-Logos doctrine is in practice limited to the Christian theological circle and is its existential criterion. But what is Tillich's basis for making this existential criterion into a formal criterion, valid for other religions too?

To answer this, Tillich's critical phenomenology must be recalled. The two moments of Tillich's critical phenomenology may be observed to be present in his claims for Apologetic theology. The divine answer is received in the revelatory situation of the first moment (the concrete existential-critical moment) but the phenomenological task of the second moment (the intuitive-descriptive moment) is exercised to show the universal meaning of the answer. Apologetic theology starts

⁴⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p. 16.

from the concrete standpoint of one's religion, and establishes a *formal criterion*, on the basis of which this same theology can be called *the* theology. There is a circularity in this approach because the formal criterion is based on one religion, which same religion then is elevated as meeting the criterion perfectly. Tillich himself is aware of the problem of circularity elsewhere, and states that in spiritual matters this is unavoidable, because what is attained has been attained only because it was there in the first place. The very process of correlating divine answers to the human situation presupposes that the answer is present. The questions of the situation are important in so far as they determine the form in which the answers are received.

So any special claim of one's own religion should partly be seen in the light of this tension between the existential criterion and formal criterion, including the following claim of Tillich: "Christian theology has a foundation which infinitely transcends the foundations of everything in the history of religion which could be called 'theology.'"⁴⁸ It is certainly puzzling that while Tillich on the one hand is working with a clear awareness of the tension between the existential criterion and the formal criterion, on the other hand he simply elevates the existential criterion to a formal criterion. He seems to absolutize his own formal criterion without being open to the possibility of the Christian criterion requiring to be in a dialectical tension with a criterion emerging as a formal criterion from another religion.

In discussing the significance of apologetic theology, the fact of the theologian's relation to the contemporary interpretations of human existence already suggested her/his critical acceptance of the thought-forms and language in which the quest for life and meaning are expressed. This critical function which the theologian must exercise demands a framework, a philosophical framework, in terms of which

⁴⁸Tillich, *ST* I, p.18.

the existential questions can be consistently interpreted. Situation's implied demand for a theoretical framework will now be discussed in relation to theology's further tasks.

2. The Correlation of Philosophy and Theology

Tillich in fact proposed philosophical theology as another name for answering theology or apologetic theology, which "although based on the same *kerygma*, tries to explain the contents of the *kerygma* in close interrelation with philosophy".⁴⁹ It is not, however, the same correlation as the earlier one, for now the questions asked are more universal, not just the interpretations of existence limited to the special realms of knowledge and life. Philosophy

primarily does not ask about the special character of the beings, the things and events, the ideas and values, the souls and bodies which share being. Philosophy asks what about this being itself.⁵⁰

So the question philosophy asks is basically about the object theology approaches and understands in different ways.

Philosophy necessarily asks the question of reality as a whole, the question of the structure of being. Theology necessarily asks the same question, for that which concerns us ultimately must belong to reality as a whole; it must belong to being. Otherwise we could not encounter it, and it could not concern us. Of course, it cannot be one being among others; then it would not concern us infinitely.⁵¹

From the perspective of this study, that of determining Tillich's pluralism, the philosophy-theology correlation will be examined to see if the philosophy Tillich develops allows theology to broaden both its framework and to address wider issues of reality as they emerge in the concrete situations of different cultures. This will be

⁴⁹Tillich, *PE*, p. 84. See also *ibid.*, pp. 83, 89.

⁵⁰Tillich, *PE*, p. 85. Also: "Philosophy asks the ultimate question that can be asked, namely, the question as to what being, simply being, means." (*ibid.*)

⁵¹Tillich, *ST I*, pp. 20-1

done here in two stages. First whether philosophy and theology address the same question(s) so that philosophy can contribute to theology's concerns will be discussed. And second whether Tillich's ontology takes into consideration the important philosophical insights of other religio-philosophical frameworks will be briefly discussed by limiting ourselves to Tillich's examples.

That philosophy and theology address the same object has been pointed out. Theology identifies this object as ultimate concern or being-itself. Philosophy asks the question of "what is", and in doing so the ultimate concern, which is true of every philosopher, is brought into *reality as a whole*, which is being investigated.⁵² Although all philosophers do not accept the reality of ultimate concern, let alone professing that ultimate concern figures in their investigation, Tillich still believes that the philosopher is related to an ultimate concern by the fact of being human. He points out that humans in their long history have asked the question of being in prephilosophical terms - through language, art, cult and social life - and in terms of methodical philosophy.⁵³ All religious and theological literature show the interdependence between prephilosophy and philosophy⁵⁴ on the one hand, theology is present in metaphysical systems such as classical Greek philosophy, and religio-philosophico-ethical systems such as Vedanta Hinduism (with its mystical speculations) and prophetic monotheism of Judaism (with its ethical, legal and ritual expressions based on divine law).⁵⁵ Also, from a historical analysis of the modern period, we have shown under "Religion and Culture" that the secular humanist emerged out of a religious background and cannot remove that basis without losing

⁵²See Tillich, *ST I*, pp.63-4.

⁵³Tillich, *BRSUR*, pp.9-10.

⁵⁴Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.10.

⁵⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.16.

her/his account of truth. In the same way, "the philosopher cannot escape his theological background".⁵⁶

In a statement about what the human capacity to develop language reveals of human nature, Tillich shows that the connection between ultimate concern (the fact of transcending one's finite situation) and philosophy (the development of universal concepts):

Language is the expression of man's freedom from the given situation and its concrete demands. It gives him universals in whose power he can create worlds above the given world of technical civilization and spiritual content.

Conversely, the development of these worlds determines the development of language.⁵⁷

Language has a direct relationship with the religious act: "Without language there is no act of faith, no religious experience! This refers to language generally and to the special language in every function of man's spiritual life."⁵⁸ Here a strong connection between religion and its expressions in cultural life is reflected. This implies an implicit rejection of mystical religion or mystical theology that claims a pure identity with the ultimate and an empty silence as the means to salvation. (As we have seen and shall see, the mystical element in the sense of immediate awareness of the divine is essential for every worthwhile theology.)

If religion is universal in that it seeks to transcend every finite form, but at the same time is related to the concrete situation, then the philosophy that can help a theology that interprets the at once universal and concrete religious experience must be comprised of analytical tools that are suited to the universal and concrete. Tillich addresses the universal in terms of an "essentialist" analysis, and the concrete in terms of an "existentialist" analysis:

⁵⁶Tillich, *PTTB*, p.129.

⁵⁷Tillich, *TC*, p.47.

⁵⁸Tillich, *DF*, p.24.

The first deals with the unity and diversity of life in its essential nature. It describes what I venture to call "*the multidimensional unity of life*." Only if this unity and the relation of the dimensions and realms of life are understood, can we analyse the existential ambiguities of all processes correctly and express the quest for unambiguous or eternal life adequately.⁵⁹

The two analyses are different, and are to be correlated. But even this correlation would require a framework, which would give a proper structure to the correlation. Tillich proposes and develops an ontological framework as adequate for this purpose. Although ontology appears to be more essentialist, by positing nonbeing with being and a tension between the two Tillich makes his ontology capable of comprehending the existential as well. "Ontology is not a speculative-fantastic attempt to establish a world behind the world; it is an analysis of those structures of being which we encounter in every meeting with reality."⁶⁰

How does one validate and develop an ontology that comprehends reality in universal and concrete terms? The epistemological question is about the basis of ontological concepts in terms of the *a priori* status of the concepts. These concepts are not known prior to experience. They are only known by critical analysis of various forms of experience, but the ontological concepts are presupposed in every actual experience.⁶¹ So Tillich suggests the human as the key to the ontological structure:

Man occupies a pre-eminent position in ontology, not as an outstanding object among other objects, but as that being who asks the ontological question and in whose self-awareness the ontological answer can be found.⁶²

But he claims that the same concepts are at the same time true of all living beings and of the inorganic realm.⁶³ For Tillich ontology is primarily concerned with the

⁵⁹Tillich, *ST* III, pp.12-13.

⁶⁰Tillich, *ST* I, p.20.

⁶¹Tillich, *ST* I, p.166.

⁶²Tillich, *ST* I, p.168.

⁶³"One can speak of self-centeredness in atoms as well as in animals, wherever the reaction to a stimulus is dependent on a structural whole". (Tillich, *ST* I, p.169) And also: "All beings

structure of being, on which structure all ontological concepts are based. The basic ontological structure is the relation between the self and world. With his identifying of a structure as the basis of his ontology he seeks to save it from the error of one-sidedness, which is evident in a philosophy based on the self alone such as Fichte's subjective idealism; a one-sided philosophy based on the world alone is found in Hobbes. In these one-sided philosophies after a construction based on either the self or the world, because the opposite in each case cannot be avoided there is an "irrational leap" towards it.⁶⁴ But for Tillich:

There is no self-consciousness without world-consciousness, but the converse also is true. World-consciousness is possible only on the basis of a fully developed self-consciousness.⁶⁵

It is in the dynamic interactions between the self and the world that changes on both sides happen, the structure itself remaining unchangeable preventing one-sided interpretations (the isolation of self from the world or *vice versa* is not possible in reality). This self-world structure helps the self to relate to the manifold contents of the world perspeively. Hence the world is not a sum of contents but a "structural whole" as expressed by the Greek *kosmos*, and Latin *universum*.

The whole opposite man is *one* at least in this respect, that it is related to us perspeively, however discontinuous it may be in itself. Every pluralistic philosopher speaks of the pluralistic character of the *world*, thus implicitly rejecting an absolute pluralism.⁶⁶

Ontology's insistence on the primacy of the structure of being is a resistance against beings being regarded as things without subjectivity. It also means that "ontology cannot begin with things and try to derive the structure of reality from them".⁶⁷ The structure of a subject and object is present in every asking of the ontological question,

have an enviroment which is *their* environment." (Tillich, *ST I*, p.170)

⁶⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.171.

⁶⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.171.

⁶⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.170.

⁶⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.173.

for there is "an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked". The subject-object relation in turn

presupposes the self-world structure as the basic articulation of being. the self having a world to which it belongs - this highly dialectical structure - logically and experientially precedes all other structures. Its analysis should be the first step in every ontological task.⁶⁸

The primacy of structure in ontology has a positive significance for the question of pluralism. Structure suggests that all beings possess all the elements of the structure, but there is no ideal way for the elements to constitute themselves. So one form of actualization cannot judge another. In the sphere of moral actions, structure demands that each individual make moral decisions to become a person. This structure remains common for all cultures, though the "ethical content of moral action has progressed from primitive to mature cultures in terms of refinement and breadth".⁶⁹ The structure itself is not relative such that each culture has its own structure, implying the impossibility of direct comparisons, but creative acts in culture provide new contents to both functions of *theoria* and *praxis*, including those of morality and religion.⁷⁰

This ontological structure then provides Tillich with a frame which is universally valid and which is presupposed in every actual structure and experience.

Ontology is possible because there are concepts which are less universal than being but more universal than any ontic concept, that is, more universal than any concept designating a realm of beings. Such concepts have been called "principles" or "categories" or "ultimate notions".⁷¹

Beyond the basic structural level, Tillich identifies three levels and their respective ontological concepts. We shall appreciate the theological significance of these three

⁶⁸Tillich, *ST I*, pp.164-165.

⁶⁹Tillich, *ST III*, p.355.

⁷⁰Tillich, *ST III*, p.354.

⁷¹Tillich, *ST I*, p.164.

levels before we point out how God as the ground of being constitutes the basic ontological structure. The level which is just above the structural, not in any dependent terms but as defining the way the structure becomes actual in the next level which is the existential level, consists of three pairs of polar relations. These are: individuality and universality, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny. Each pole is present in the opposite pole's actualization but as part of the process rather than as directly relevant to the aim of the process. "In these three polarities, the first element expresses the self-relatedness of being, its power of being something for itself, while the second element expresses the belongingness of being, its character of being a part of the universe of being."⁷² Individualization and participation as ontological elements are true for all beings. In humans, becoming a self involves the particular individual's attainment of self-relatedness, overcoming the possible divisions within oneself through the element of participation. Similarly the attainment of communion with other persons involves participation, which is not simply accidental but essential for the individual. The concept that the human individual is a *microcosmos* suggests her/his participation in all levels of life. Tillich sees the failures of classical nominalism and realism in the former's interpretation of reality in terms of the individual character of things by rejecting all universals and hence the participation element, and in the latter's interpretation of reality in terms of the universals or essential structures that are present in the individual by making the individual inconsequential before a new level of reality created behind empirical reality.⁷³ The significance of individualization and participation for Christian theology is pointed out by Tillich as the individual's participation in the New Being manifest in Jesus as the Christ. Though this mutuality of the two elements is demanded by the

⁷²Tillich, *ST I*, p.165.

⁷³Tillich, *ST I*, pp.177-178. Tillich points out: "The word "realism" means today almost what "nominalism" meant in the Middle Ages, while the "realism" of the Middle Ages expresses almost exactly what we call "idealism" today" (*ibid.*, p.178, n.2).

Christian faith, Tillich's religious typology shows the prominence of the individualization element in the prophetic religions and the prominence of the participation element in the sacramental and mystical religions.

The next pair of elements, dynamics and form, has special theological significance too, especially in respect of the concept of God. To be something is to have a form, a structure. Dynamics "cannot be thought as something that is; nor can it be thought as something that is not. It is the *me on*, the potentiality of being, which is nonbeing in contrast to things that have a form, and the power of being in contrast to pure nonbeing".⁷⁴ According to Tillich, Christian theology fought against Greek philosophy's raising of the dynamic element or nonbeing as the ultimate principle. Christianity did this by placing form in the depth of divinity. In Thomas Aquinas, however, static form characterized the doctrine of God as *actus purus*. The lack of the dynamic element in God was introduced by Protestant mysticism drawing from the insights of Duns Scotus and Luther. This polar dialectic might have a special role to play in expounding the concepts of God in the world religions. But it should be used as an analytical tool by giving due consideration to the intellectual framework to which the concepts of the divine belong. This means that the dynamics-form analysis should be considered as one of the useful tools, not the only possible or best analytical tool.

The last pair of polar elements are freedom and necessity. Freedom is a transcendence of destiny, which is the essential nature of being, to make existence possible. Destiny is the concrete structure that is us, from which our decisions, which express our freedom, arises. "Destiny is not a strange power which determines what shall happen to me. It is myself as given, formed by nature, history, and myself. My

⁷⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.179.

destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny."⁷⁵ The polarity of destiny and freedom correspond to the relation between essence and existence in the next level in Tillich's ontology, as we shall see.

After the structural level and after the level with three pairs of ontological elements, Tillich speaks of being as it is manifest in actuality, in historical existence, in the third level of his ontology. Basically the two principles effective in this level are essence and existence. Tillich points out that this level is anticipated by destiny and freedom. But freedom does not correspond to existence, for freedom is an element or a positive force that makes humans human, whereas existence is not a necessary condition that humans should be in, although it is the actual state humans are in due to freedom's unity with finitude. "Finite freedom is the turning point from being to existence."⁷⁶ Existence is the condition in which the universal principles or the pairs of polar elements manifest themselves. Now the threat of individualization and participation losing their unity becomes a possibility. In losing the one, both are lost. Loss of self-relatedness results in loneliness, in which even participation or communion with others is also lost. Similarly, loss of participation results in surrender to the collective, in which even individuality and subjectivity are lost. Next, in the case of the polarity of dynamics and form, in the anxiety of dynamics about losing itself in forms it might make a break with form to end up in chaos, losing both dynamics and form. And the anxiety about what form vitality and intentionality would take might result in confining oneself to the forms at hand, thereby paving the way for losing both dynamics and form. Finally, the polarity of freedom and destiny lead humans to anxieties that might result in the loss of both. One's freedom is threatened when s/he realizes that her/his freedom has the almost impossible task of acting in accordance with the demands of her/his destiny. And one's destiny is threatened when

⁷⁵Tillich, *ST I*, p.185.

⁷⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.165.

it is not accepted without reservations by freedom, which acts with an arbitrariness towards destiny because of its resistance to only some part of one's destiny being realized.⁷⁷ The threat that emerges from the three polarities in human existence have theological significance for Tillich in that they represent the one question (in different forms dependent on the situation) of salvation that humans ask for. The question of existence is answered in terms of the Christ, who is the symbol of the reunion of essence and existence.

The fourth and final level of Tillich's ontology has to do with a special function within existence, namely that of the mind grasping and shaping reality.⁷⁸ This function is taken out of the existential level to a new level simply for the purpose of analysis, recognizing the fact that epistemology has an identity of its own in any philosophical and systematic theological inquiries. The mind grasps reality through forms called "categories". Tillich identifies four main categories: time, space, causality and substance. Each of the categories relate to an encounter of the self to the world in which an anxiety-courage union in the self corresponds to a being-nonbeing union in the world. Ontology does not see *time* as either negatively as transitory or positively as creative. Rather "time unites the anxiety of transitoriness with the courage of a self-affirming present". In order to be one has to have *space*. But finitude implies that one does not have any definite space, and there is the final threat of losing all space. There is therefore the anxiety of spacelessness on the one hand, and courage to affirm the present and with it space on the other hand. By accepting ontological insecurity one accepts security in the very acceptance. *Cause* refers to that which precedes a thing or an event. It suggests the power of being in a thing - the thing by itself being contingent. Thus an anxiety of the lack of necessity of one's being arises. Courage is the acceptance of one's contingency, such that one rests

⁷⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.198-200.

⁷⁸Tillich, *ST I*, pp.192-198.

in herself/himself. *Substance* is that which underlies the flux of appearances. And since substance is nothing beyond its appearances, there is the anxiety of losing one's substance in constant change. Courage is the act of attributing substantiality to an appearance - an act of "affirming the finite, of taking one's anxiety upon himself".⁷⁹ The question of the possibility of courage in all the four categories is, for Tillich, the question of God. Hence the theological significance of this fourth level.

God or being-itself has been presupposed or asked for in every ontological concept. We shall now point out how being-itself is significant in this structure, and not enter into any full discussion of his understanding of God, which has already been done earlier. God precedes the ontological structure as its very basis. Tillich finds God presupposed, even if not acknowledged, in all philosophical and theological systems.

The theological concepts of both idealists and naturalists are rooted in a "mystical a priori," an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object.⁸⁰

And he points out how the philosophical disposition leads to the asking of the question of ultimate reality, thereby showing the closeness of the philosophical quest and the religious quest:

It is our finitude in interdependence with the finitude of our world which drives us to search for ultimate reality. This search is a consequence of our encounter as finite beings with a finite world. Because we stand between being and nonbeing and long for a form of being that prevails against nonbeing in ourselves and in our world, we philosophize.⁸¹

The fundamental philosophical question arises from an *existential* basis, but is asked in universal terms as a question of "the mystery that there is anything at all".⁸² And because the question refers to that which precedes every form and quality but at the

⁷⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p. 198.

⁸⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p. 9.

⁸¹Tillich, *BRSUR*, p. 14.

⁸²Tillich, *BRSUR*, p. 6.

same time present in every form and quality, that ground of all being can be only thought of in most general terms:

But being-as-such has neither static nor dynamic implications. It precedes any special qualification. It points to the original fact that there is something and not nothing and to the power of that which is to resist nonbeing.⁸³

Since God, for Tillich, refers to this fundamental reality in which alone the essential nature of humans are to be found, even the hostility of humans to God is only an affirmation of the fact that they belong to God.⁸⁴ Being-itself precedes any particular understanding of God. So since atheisms are rejections of particularly defined theisms, the rejections have nothing to do with being-itself. Reason itself belongs to the depth of reason and is dependent on this depth for its preservation. Tillich suggests the ontological relationship between being-itself and being as the source of the relationship between the depth of reason and reason:

The depth of reason is the expression of something that is not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it.... This is not another field of reason which could progressively be discovered and expressed, but it is that which is expressed through every rational expression.⁸⁵

So the correlation of philosophy and theology is valid because "there is a point of identity between the ultimate of the philosophical question and the ultimate of the religious concern".⁸⁶ The ways in which the ultimate is sought and expressed are however different: philosophy doing its task conceptually, and theology doing it through symbols. (But increasingly theology interprets and reinterprets the religious symbols in dialogue with the prevalent thought-patterns.) The philosopher abstracts from the concrete expressions of religion and creates "generally valid concepts concerning religion. The theologian, on the other hand, claims the universal validity

⁸³Tillich, *BRSUR*, p.16.

⁸⁴Tillich, *ST II*, p.45.

⁸⁵Tillich, *ST I*, 79.

⁸⁶Tillich, *DF*, pp.90-91.

of the Christian message in spite of its concrete and special character."⁸⁷ The common pursuit of the two but the distinctness of their functions is put succinctly by Tillich:

Philosophy and theology are divergent as well as convergent. They are convergent as far as both are existential and theoretical at the same time. They are divergent as far as philosophy is basically theoretical and theology is basically existential.⁸⁸

Tillich's idea, appreciated earlier, that all spiritual elements are within each other despite their distinct character, allows him to see reason and faith in their common concern and in their mutually-related functions.⁸⁹ This means that "philosophy and theology are not a priori in conflict. Whether they are or not depends on the special character of both."⁹⁰ Being and meaning, which concern both philosophy and theology, are never given in any absolute terms, although they are asked in every existential quest and expressed in a plurality of experiences and systems of understanding of reality.

The philosopher's theoretical task in terms of the ontological framework has been appreciated in this section. In the last section, the theologian's concrete task of participating in one's religious and historical situation to discover and interpret the kerygma in a relevant manner. These two correlations come into play in the theologian's task, which starts with a concrete connection with revelation, before s/he moves ahead to perform the critical task of examining the adequacy of the forms in which the message is contained in the light of the universal principles offered by ontology, and finally carries out the interpretative task of presenting the message in

⁸⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.10.

⁸⁸Tillich, *PE*, p.88. Also: "Theology deals with what concerns us inescapably, ultimately, unconditionally. It deals with it not as far as it *is* but as far as it is *for us*." (Tillich, *PE*, p.87)

⁸⁹See Tillich, *DF*, p.75.

⁹⁰Tillich, *PE*, 216.

response to the questions of the situation. Revelation is the starting point of the theologian because that is the basis of all religious phenomena.

Revelation is first of all the experience in which an ultimate concern grasps the human mind and creates a community in which this concern expresses itself in symbols of action, imagination and thought.⁹¹

Although revelation is experienced concretely, the theologian is nevertheless in touch with the rational structure which is evident in the rational forms which express the revelation (depth of reason being identical with revelation):

The rational approach seems to fall outside the revelatory situation and to be without any revelatory function. Indeed, reason is not revelatory. But in every creation of reason the depth of reason is present and makes itself felt, in form as well as in content.⁹²

The theologian is on the one hand conditioned by the concreteness of the revelation which he seeks to expound, and on the other hand by his situation and the criteria with which s/he evaluates her/his material. For this reason one cannot do a theology that is objective and meaningful for all:

In every assumedly scientific theology there is a point where individual experience, traditional valuation, and personal commitment must decide the issue. This point, often hidden to the authors of such theologies, is obvious to those who look at them with other experiences and other commitments.⁹³

Hence Tillich's suggestion that theology should be done in the concreteness of experience and thought which is possible through a kerygma-situation analysis. And from our discussion above, it follows that the results of the kerygma-situation analysis should be processed in the light of an ontology such as Tillich's.

A critical assessment of Tillich's ontology will now be made. First, the term "being" is itself a suspect term because of the meaning it has acquired: either an essential quality or a supreme living reality underlying empirical reality. Here being

⁹¹Tillich, *DF*, p. 78.

⁹²Tillich, *ST I*, p. 140.

⁹³Tillich, *ST I*, p. 8.

has a static sense. But Tillich looks at being in dynamic terms: on the one hand affirming reality in all its expressions, and on the other showing that these expressions are determined by the interplay of polar elements, the most basic of them being 'being' and 'non-being'. Second, Tillich's claim that ontology is an essential structure valid for reality as a whole, for the religious reality and for the experiences of all kinds of being seems to be too tall a claim. How can he claim that all realities can be comprehended through a few polar concepts, which are mainly shown to be true in the case of human experience? Tillich simply "confirms the essential character of the ontological structure"⁹⁴ by showing how existential threat is real and how one loses oneself in a decision to act on the basis of one side pole of a polarity. He states that ontology is valid for all kinds of being by analogy.⁹⁵ In any case, Tillich is not suggesting that systematic theology should itself be developing a complete (if at all possible) ontological system: "Systematic theology cannot, and should not, enter into the ontological discussion as such. Yet it can and must consider these central concepts from the point of view of their theological significance."⁹⁶

Third, Keith Ward's criticism of Tillich as a theologian of inner experience, which we refuted earlier, might have some validity here. It might be said that ontology can limit the scope of theology to the realm of the individual, ignoring social and historical factors that influence religion and theology. Tillich is keen to address psychological and sociological problems, but he seeks to interpret the situation in terms of the ontological concepts.⁹⁷ He takes the ontological concepts to the social and historical realities to analyze them. Thus he discusses highly social concepts like love, power and justice in ontological terms, and underlines the common basis of both ontology and theology: "the ontological and the theological are in one point identical:

⁹⁴Tillich, *ST I*, p.201.

⁹⁵See Tillich, *ST I*, p.185.

⁹⁶Tillich, *ST I*, p.164.

⁹⁷See Tillich, *ST I*, p.198.

both deal with being as being".⁹⁸ Tillich's view that the historical conditions by themselves are not as significant for the theologian as human self-interpretations of them coupled with his view that ontology is presupposed in every existential experience and in every existential interpretation leads him to prove the validity and usefulness of his ontology by choosing the work of philosophers as examples. Thus his ontology which sees every interpretation of the human reality as presupposing a certain dynamic between essence and existence: essence and existence as two realms in Plato; the two represented as potentiality and actuality in Aristotle; the two contrasted with each other in the later Schelling, Kierkegaard and Heidegger; existence derived from essence in Spinoza and Hegel; and essence derived from existence in Dewey and Sartre.⁹⁹ He would see his ontology as neither alienating essence and existence nor reducing the one to the other, but affirming the two in their proper relation. Essence is fulfilled only in its actualization as existence, and existence seeks to be united with and moves towards its essence for its fulfilment. Also, Tillich's preoccupation with the ontological as compared to the historical is his concern to judge the situation in terms of a criterion or universal structure. This logos or universal structure expressed in terms of a subject-object relation is, for him, the basis for comparing various interpretations of the respective reality in the given period. Hence he points out that an existentialist interpreter of the situation cannot avoid terms which presuppose the universal. Similarly without some universal basis, the radical positivist cannot judge history.¹⁰⁰

In this account of Tillich's ontology we have mainly made statements to show the theological significance of the above ontology. Only in a few instances were references made to philosophical or theological positions with their tendencies

⁹⁸Tillich, *LPJ*, p.107.

⁹⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.165.

¹⁰⁰Tillich, *UC*, p.56..

towards polarization rather than mediation from an ontological perspective. In line with the purpose of this study, we are not required to show how thoroughly mediating Tillich's theological approach based on ontology is, nor required to establish that he is a pluralist on the basis of offering *one* way in which the common basis of the religions and quasi-religions can be appreciated. Viewing his ontology with this concern, it will not be difficult to show that theological attempts in the various religions either emphasize one polar element or work out a creative tension between the two. The ontological analysis can on the basis of its complex frame with concepts which relate to existential and objective factors in a wide range of human experience be seen as a more helpful tool than Tillich's religious typology to appreciate the various forms of religion. It might be possible to see more variations within the mystical and prophetic religions. Also, since Tillich's approach sees ontology in correlation with theology, the theologies of the religions can also demand revision of the ontology. Ontology is meant to help clarify, define and interpret theology in relation to wider reality. Ontology is not meant to determine theology.

Only with this openness can ontology serve as a useful tool in the analysis of the human situation and of systems of thought, including theologies. Its commitment to both sides of the polarities suggests a judgment of each concrete situation in terms of both poles. The moment of judgment which is filled with ultimacy can become the *kairos* for finding a new tension between the polar elements. So this moment which is both revelatory and creative at once should affirm both the universal character of ontology as well as its openness to concrete reality. We have said earlier that Tillich's starting point is the concrete standpoint and that only through a phenomenological interpretation which takes other similar concrete standpoints into consideration that universal principles are suggested. The intuitive-descriptive task of his critical phenomenology is a continuous task and should be exercised with the availability of every new data. So the universal principles that have been identified are not final in

our intuition of them, although a correspondence of them to the logos structure of reality is claimed. The question about being-itself is universal, but the answers have to be constantly worked out in a philosophy-theology correlation:

[But] only the philosophical question is perennial, not the answers. There is a continuous process of interpretation of philosophical elements and elements of faith, not *one* philosophical faith.¹⁰¹

In the kerygma-situation correlation, situation was seen as characterized by historical conditions and interpretations of existence in the given period. And in the philosophy-theology correlation, history was appreciated as one of the dimensions *for which* ontological concepts were applicable and *in terms of which* the extent of the validity of the concepts could be assessed. But now we move on to discuss more directly the relation of history to theology, especially the relation of the history of religions to the theological task.

3. The Correlation of the Systematic and the Historical

The title of Tillich's last public lecture, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian", is modest in that Tillich limits himself to speaking from the perspective of systematic theology. However, he also proposes a religious typology that derives from an analysis based on two identifiable elements in the nature of the holy, the holy as present and the holy as ought-to-be, which according to him determine the actual form of a historical religion in its particular context. This typology then serves as a tool for a systematic analysis of the religions. We have seen Tillich using this in his analysis of religion and culture (religious reservation and religious obligation) and in his analysis of the religions (universal revelation and final revelation). This systematic approach was also seen to be free of a Christian superiority due to the two elements being interdependent. The latter element in each

¹⁰¹Tillich, *DF*, p.94 (*italics* Tillich's).

pair is implied in the first as its aim, which means that every religious expression is valid only in so far as the aim is present.

While discussing Tillich's typology of religion, the point was made that the two-fold nature of the holy was observed from the concrete religions. Systematic theology, in virtue of sharing with philosophy concern about the same ultimate, does draw from philosophy universal concepts which help identify certain common features between or among the concrete religions. But theology's primary concern is to attend to the inner consistency of the concrete religion. The nature of this systematic-historical correlation will now be examined to see if Tillich's approach to this boundary situation affirms at once the significance of the religious symbols for the life and practice of the respective communities and the possibility of common and unique insights that the religions can offer for an interpretation of the contemporary historical situation.

The aim of the discussion is to show that discussion will proceed in two stages. First, a systematic principle identified from Tillich's religious typology will be shown as useful for an interpretation of history in religious terms. This will involve a highlighting of the place of Christ as the "centre of history". Second, to what extent a systematic analysis of history can be correlated to an articulation of the existential and traditional meanings of religious symbols of the different religions will be discussed.

Tillich spells out in his introduction to *CEWR* the systematic analysis that is suited to an interpretation of history in concrete terms, taking into account the historical situation generally and the way religions and quasi-religions respond to it:

[A] participant in the dynamics of the situation .. selects facts according to his judgment of their relative importance, interprets these in the light of his own understanding, and evaluates them with reference to the *telos*, the inner aim

he perceives in the movement of history generally, and in particular the history of religion.¹⁰²

Negatively, Tillich rejects an indifferent attitude towards history generally and the history of religion particularly.¹⁰³ Positively, he proposes an understanding of the historical situation as a *participant*. This means that the theologian is in some way aware of the trends in the situation, which trends then he can evaluate from a theological point of view. In this sense, then, Tillich is not saying anything more than what he demands of a theologian of culture. The participant approach is concrete on the one hand, thus giving some authenticity to whatever interpretation is given of the situation or whatever general understanding of the reality is constructed on the basis of the situation. On the other hand the criterion of mere participation is likely to lead to a lesser or greater accurate descriptive account of the situation but lacking in perspective. Tillich believes in a critical account of the situation, which means the use of some *universal* criteria to *select* the relevant facts in the historical process - implying that all facts are not equally important.

Culture, as representing the special forms relating to a certain historical situation, is important for the theologian for identifying the questions of the time and at the same time the vehicles for expressing the kerygma. The theologian's critical task, however, requires that he judge which facts are appropriate from the many s/he might identify. Cultural creations are therefore essential for understanding the trends in history, for culture is a continuous interpretation of the moments of history. Hence Tillich takes the "history of religion and culture" as a single unit and suggests it as the "broader source of systematic theology".¹⁰⁴ He reminds and reaffirms in the

¹⁰²Tillich, *CEWR*, 2.

¹⁰³Tillich attacks an "indifferent" attitude towards history, such as Luther's idea that history is the realm of "God's strange acting". For Tillich: "The absolute - to vary a famous saying of Hegel - is not so impotent as to remain in separation from the relative. It appears in the relative as judgment and creation." (Tillich, *PE*, p.38)

¹⁰⁴Tillich, *ST I*, pp.38-40.

introduction to his final volume of *ST* that he is committed to using "philosophical and psychological concepts" and discussing "sociological and scientific theories" rather than making use of biblical language because of the contemporaneousness of the former.¹⁰⁵ In an immediate way history and culture determine the theologian's language and her/his spiritual life. In terms of his theological function, s/he interacts, draws from and criticizes various forms of culture. Since the theologian has the remit to speak to the situation from the situation, s/he must cross the boundaries of bible ("basic source of systematic theology") and history of Christianity or tradition (the "guiding" element in theological interpretation¹⁰⁶) but without losing them in the development of a contemporary theology.

Theology must be free from and for the concepts it uses. It must be free from a confusion of its conceptual form with its substance, and it must be free to express this substance with every tool which proves to be more adequate than those given by the ecclesiastical tradition.¹⁰⁷

However, Tillich warns that one's *experience* in the historical situation and of culture should not be confused with history and culture as sources for the theologian. Experience is not a source but a medium. Hence he criticizes experiential theology for its claim that "open experience" is a source of systematic theology:

The encounter with great non-Christian religions, the evolutionary scheme of thought, the openness for the new which characterizes the pragmatic method, have had the consequence that experience has become not only the main source of systematic theology but an inexhaustible source out of which new truths can be taken continually.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵Tillich, *ST* III, p.4.

¹⁰⁶Tillich, *PTTB*, p.133.

¹⁰⁷Tillich, *ST* II, p.142. Though Tillich sees the biblical disciplines as having "basic significance" for theology, he gives "full theological standing" to church history and the history of religion and culture. The criterion for a discipline to be theological is not its "supernatural origin but its significance for the interpretation of our ultimate concern" (Tillich, *ST* I, pp.29-30).

¹⁰⁸Tillich, *ST* I, p.45.

The distinction between source and medium is crucial for Tillich. "The medium colors the presentation and determines the interpretation of what it receives."¹⁰⁹ Being a participant in the situation does not make one's experience itself a source or a form. Revelation can come to a saint or prophet, but "it comes against him and to him and not from him."¹¹⁰ This is Tillich's indictment against religious sects in their special claims and their isolationism. In contrast to such making a norm of subjective experiences, Tillich suggests that one participate in the historical situation such that one's ultimate concern is at once ultimate and concrete. "He who wants to know the power of reality in the depth of his historical existence must be in actual contact with the concrete, unrepeatable tensions of the present."¹¹¹ The emphasis on the historical and not the experiential is made by Tillich in respect of the Christ event:

The event on which Christianity is based ... is not derived from experience; it is *given* in history. Experience is not the source from which the contents of systematic theology are taken but the medium through which they are existentially received."¹¹²

Tillich is not worried that a study of history will reveal that God has no place in the experience and interpretations of it in people in the present time, and thereby lead to the end of theology, a theology based on the concept of God. For he sees the idea of God as a permanent part of human experience, appearing differently in accordance with social changes:

Historical forces determine the existence of the idea of God, not its essence; they determine its variable manifestations, not its invariable nature. The social situation of a period conditions the idea of God, but it does not produce it.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹Tillich, *ST I*, p.46.

¹¹⁰Tillich, *ST I*, p.46.

¹¹¹Tillich, *PE*, p.75.

¹¹²Tillich, *ST I*, p.42.

¹¹³Tillich, *ST I*, p.220.

Historical forces influence the understanding of God on the one hand, and the universal and concrete aspects in the conception of God and also the two elements of his religious typology on the other.

The development of the meaning of God has two interdependent causes: the tension within the idea of God and the general factors determining the movement of history (e.g., economic, political, and cultural factors).¹¹⁴

The way Tillich sees the importance of history for theology is by identifying how history is interpreted.

Mystical religions have a negative attitude towards history, and so its interpretation of history is rejected by Tillich. They have a non-historical interpretation of history: "Historical existence has no meaning in itself. One must live in it and act reasonably, but history itself can neither create the new nor be truly real."¹¹⁵ Tillich finds a mystical element at the root of a materialistic understanding in socialism, and shows that this socialist approach interprets history from the perspective of natural science in mechanical terms, just like the bourgeoisie materialism it was fighting against. In contrast to this form of socialism, he presents a socialism (Religious Socialism) which is profoundly aware of history and accepts the new in terms of conflict, not as the result of a natural process.¹¹⁶ He also sees Christianity as the background to utopian ideas¹¹⁷ of a stage of reason in bourgeoisie thinking, of a stage of classless society in working-class movements and of a stage in the evolutionary process. Another interpretation of history but one which is a historical interpretation of history is found among the churches. This is an interpretation of the "transcendent" type. It is inadequate because it separates the Kingdom of God from history. After Christ's saving act in history, nothing essentially

¹¹⁴Tillich, *STI*, 220.

¹¹⁵Tillich, *ST III*, p. 375.

¹¹⁶Tillich, *PE*, pp. 34-35.

¹¹⁷Utopia, from 'outopos', can never be completely secular for it expects a reality which 'has no place in history' (Tillich *FR*, p. 68). Though it is not clear

new is expected to happen in history. The Kingdom of God is identified with a supranatural order attainable after death instead of seeing it as a dynamic power on earth.¹¹⁸

In contrast to the two above interpretations, a proper understanding of history is proposed by Tillich as a "dynamic concept" in terms of the concept of "Principle" as against a concept of essence, derived from the knowledge of nature:

A principle is the real power that supports a historical phenomenon, giving it the possibility to actualize itself anew and yet in continuity with the past.... "Principle", therefore, is not an ideological concept, but one that is descriptive of reality. A principle is the power of a historical reality, grasped in concepts.¹¹⁹

This interpretation of history is in Christian terms an affirmation of Jesus as that principle or power that manifests itself in history not as an isolated event in history or as having some continuity with the past, but as the "centre of history". This concept suggests that, "human history, seen from the point of view of the self-transcendence of history, is not only a dynamic movement, running ahead, but also a structured whole in which one point is the centre".¹²⁰ In Christ the meaning of history is affirmed, and all events of history are to be appreciated or judged from this centre.

Tillich suggests that the systematic theologian being concrete, unlike the philosopher of religion, accepts with the philosopher the "mystical a priori" that transcends the subject and object but to it adds the criterion of the Christian message, which is unrepeatably unique.¹²¹ But from what Tillich proceeds to say, it is obvious that for him the "elements of human nature" are crucial for interpreting history, especially the history of religion.¹²² What under typology of religion was shown as universal or sacramental religion is equivalent in systematic theology to the preparation and reception aspects in

¹¹⁸Tillich, *ST* III, pp.379-380.

¹¹⁹Tillich, *PTTB*, p.103 (*Italics in original*).

¹²⁰Tillich, *ST* III, p.390.

¹²¹Tillich, *ST* I, pp.9-10.

¹²²Tillich, *CEWR*, p.3.

relation to the new reality (the Christ) in history. It is, for him, the bringing of the "spiritual substance" (or better, the religious manifestations) of the religions "under the criterion of the theological norm".¹²³ Tillich points out that other religions have been left undistinguished qualitatively from each other by traditional Christian theologians because of their ingrained tendency to foreclose the subject of the history of religions, limiting salvation history to what is given in the Old and New Testaments and to what continued in church history. The history of other religions are rejected because they are considered "perversions of a kind of original revelation but without particular revelatory experiences of any value for Christian theology" and that "they are not bearers of revelation and salvation".¹²⁴ What has been overlooked by these theologians, Tillich complains, is the fact that *in practice* "Jews and Christians were both influenced religiously by the religions of conquered and conquering nations".¹²⁵

In contrast, for Tillich, the history of religions is theological because the criterion for a discipline to be theological is its power to contribute to the interpretation of our ultimate concern, and not its claim to supernatural origin.¹²⁶ And he accepts a broad understanding of the history of religion.

A theological history of religion should interpret theologically the material produced by the investigation and analysis of the prereligious and religious life of mankind. It should elaborate the motives and types of religious expression, showing how they follow from the nature of the religious concern and therefore necessarily appear in all religions, including Christianity in so far as it is a religion.¹²⁷

We have already discussed Tillich's typology of religion and appreciated its systematic character in the fact of the two-fold nature of the holy provides the basic structure.

¹²³Tillich, *PTTB*, p.133.

¹²⁴Tillich, *FR*,84.

¹²⁵Tillich, *FR*,84.

¹²⁶Tillich, *ST I*, pp.29-30.

¹²⁷Tillich, *ST I*, p.39.

The typology also showed that it could comprehend historical developments. That is, a mystical religion always remains a mystical religion in spite of its need of and openness to the prophetic element. Similarly, an ethical religion never loses its predominant prophetic spirit in spite of its need for and openness to the mystical element. For both religious life and theological thought in a concrete situation the systematic and the historical together can offer better scope for understanding.

The three dialectical approaches that determine Tillich's theological method have shown the possibility of doing theology by developing adequate tools for analysis of broader and complex realities. The kerygma-situation correlation showed the necessity of and the possibility of a theology that explores the nature of religion as ultimate concern in the light of tradition and the contemporary cultural forms. The philosophy-theology correlation showed the importance of theology reflecting on its concrete material in the light of universal principles of an ontology that is appropriate to analyzing human existence. And thirdly, the correlation and the systematic and the historical showed the importance of analyzing history for the plural notions of meaning that are present in the situation. Only a constant analysis from the side of meaning and from the side of history is adequate because meaning and historical conditions influence each other. All the three dialectical approaches affirm pluralism in that they constitute a theological method which must take other concrete expressions in addition to one's own seriously as well as find or develop broader conceptual systems to include the various phenomena. This is the basis for moving on to designate Tillich's pluralism as dialectical and to portray some features of it.

4. Towards a Dialectical Pluralism

If method stands for the inquiry into the validity of the various ways in which the object or subject matter of a discipline can be approached, then it is under theological

method that we must finally focus on the various *means* by which we conducted our analysis of Tillich's thought to determine his pluralism. In this particular study, method has occupied the last place as regards treatment, first, because identifying Tillich's theology-of-religions position is the main task, and second, because each of the means can be appreciated only in terms of its actual function in the description of the particular reality or dynamics as found in Tillich. Thus we have discussed the significance of the following means employed by Tillich in his theology: ultimate concern-preliminary concern dialectic, religion-culture dialectic, the type-determining elements of his religious typology, the two-fold elements of his critical phenomenology, the revealing-and-self-negating character of religious symbols, the kerygma-situation correlation, the philosophy-theology correlation and the systematic-historical correlation. In various places we have indicated the mutual significance and consistency of these means. These means revealed the importance a *dialectical* approach for understanding reality, especially reality from a religious standpoint.

This is the basis for designating Tillich's theology of religions "dialectical pluralism". The dialectical method that characterizes his theology is consistently applied by Tillich in affirming plurality of religious experiences, religious systems and cultural movements and cultural forms which bear an ultimate concern. Although Tillich's understanding of other religions came through academic study for the most part of his life, Tillich declared and committed himself, in the last decade of his life, to flesh-and-blood contact with representatives of the *living religions*, especially Buddhists. His dialectical approach in relation to the religions, therefore, demanded dialogue, which for him was a "dialectic of (mutual) acceptance and criticism". The nature and usefulness of dialogue as found in Tillich will now be discussed to examine its dialecticality and openness that are consistent with the pluralist principles and criteria identified earlier.

A Dialogical Approach

The participant approach of the theologian's concern with the historical, as discussed in the last section presupposes the theologian's place among other participants. The way the theologian appreciates the significance of history presupposes contact with the feelings and ideas and creative acts of people who are concerned about history. The directness of the encounter is seen by Tillich to be an important element both for its practical consequences of dealing with the important issues of justice, peace and the preservation of the created order, and of discovering the religious world of the other as the other *re-presents* it within a context of mutual quest and mutual criticism. Thus Tillich points out that isolation is no longer possible in political or religious respects, for what we have is the "one world" and it demands our concerted effort to answer the question, "what do we do with it [the one world]?"¹ The stress on the role of dialogue and the scope of dialogue in its widest agenda is here stated.

The dialogical approach can be appreciated better by showing what it is opposed to. First, it is opposed to any form of persuasion or coercion that seeks to establish one form of life or thought as final. Religions and secular traditions do have value for contemporary society, not in their efforts to convert people to their doctrines and practices but in their contributions to hope and meaning and to all that these would involve (such as the reordering of all structures that divide and exploit humans and the physical world). In this sense, "dialogue loses the character of a discussion of dogmatic subtleties and becomes a common enquiry in the light of the world situation."² A dialogue of this kind is suggested at the end of *CEWR*:

¹Tillich, *ERQR*, p.46. Here the unity that Tillich refers to are the convergences between socialism and Christianity in the particular German situation.

²Tillich, *CEWR*, p.63.

Not conversion, but dialogue. It would be a tremendous step forward if Christianity were to accept this! It would mean that Christianity would judge itself when it judges the others in the present encounter of the world religions.³

In his *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich answers the question of conversion, starting with a critical review of the various senses and contexts in which the term is used.⁴ One usage is to refer to a "spiritual experience" when one becomes *aware* of an ultimate concern from the earlier state which lacked ultimate concern (or as Tillich makes himself more precise, hidden). In this sense every spiritual experience is a conversion. Another meaning of the term is that of a "change from one set of beliefs to another". If a set of beliefs is not related to an existential connection with the ultimate concern, then conversion has no significance. If however, one set is more serious than another in focussing on the ultimacy of the ultimate concern, then conversion to that worthy set is crucial. This kind of conversion, for Tillich, is not concerned with the comparison of the sets of beliefs of the religions proper. Rather it has reference to the beliefs of a religion like Christianity over against those of a secular faith. In this case, a "methodological inquiry into those elements of the conflict which can be approached by inquiry" is suggested together with a "witness to those elements of the conflict which drive to conversion". This two-fold task is suggested by Tillich as adequate, because without arguments (which are inappropriate for one's relation to the ultimate concern anyway) and hence without fanaticism one will be able to move from the secularist belief system, where the ultimacy of the ultimate has been eroded, to Christianity, where the chances of demonizing the ultimate is less on account of the self-critical Protestant principle. Thus, conversion here, "is not a matter of prevailing arguments", but "a matter of personal surrender" to the ultimate concern.

³Tillich, *CEWR*, p.95.

⁴Tillich, *DF*, pp.123-125.

Tillich is aware that realistically everyone cannot come to profess one form of faith. Conversion in its proper sense is not an intellectual acceptance of a different form of belief, but rather an existential participation in the revelatory situation. However, since faith is a matter of ultimate concern, one expresses it in universal terms as well as expects universal fulfilment.

If missions try to bring about the conversion of many from one faith to another, they try to bring about the unity of faith in humanity as a whole. Nobody can be certain that such unity will be reached in the course of human history; nobody can deny that such unity is the desire and hope of mankind in all periods and in all places. But there is no way of reaching this unity except by distinguishing ultimacy itself from that in which ultimacy expresses itself.⁵

Now although from one's own perspective one is keen to see one's religion in universal terms, one usually does not ask about one's own conversion to another tradition, but one does seek to attain higher levels within one's own tradition. The purpose of missions is neither the saving of individuals from eternal condemnation nor the "cross-fertilization of religions and cultures" but "the actualization of the Spiritual Community within concrete churches all over the world".⁶

Tillich notes among his Japanese enquirers a desire to find the ground of their religions and cultures. Hence Tillich's answer is that of pointing to the criterion under which all religions can renew themselves.

'We don't want to bring you another religion. We want to *point to* a criterion which is the criterion over and against all religion, including our own. If you accept this criterion you may judge yourselves as much as you judge us and perhaps we can unite in the acceptance of this criterion, because this criterion is nothing other than the majesty of the divine or holy itself over against any particular form in which it appears.' In this way we stand on our basis, as Christians, as Protestants, and on the other hand we are wide open, for the other religions do not want replacement. They want to be witnesses to that which is greater than we are, not only we as human beings but also we as Christians and Protestants.⁷

⁵Tillich, *DF*, p.125.

⁶Tillich, *ST III*, p.206.

⁷Tillich, *ERQR*, pp.73-74.

That conversion in the narrow sense (of change from one tradition to the other) is not asked for by others is also testified where missions have been successful. Tillich can explain the nature of the change in terms of his religious typology. Tillich rightly points out that in the Indian context, Christian missions were successful more among the masses, due to Protestantism's humanist element impacting on the people through medicine and science.⁸ The transformation element of the prophetic religion was welcome news for the oppressed masses. Either society transformed from within as in the case of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism to attain social status and freedom, or they converted to the prophetic religions of Christianity and Islam.

A second inadequate approach to dialogue is the mistake of demanding an unconditional statement that all religions are equal. On the one hand it is a rightful demand in a democratic state in which every religious group should have equal rights. Samartha points out that the Neo-Hindu idea of the equality of religions (*sarva dharma samanvaya tattva*) originated in connection with "a *political affirmation* of the relationships between different religious communities... than a *theological statement* on the relationships between religions". This is not the traditional Indian view, which is one that proposes that a particular religion find a *place* among the coexisting religions. It is not enough for a religion to stay among other religions and simply affirm its relative or universal validity. Rather each religion would be expected to represent its truth in a colloquy of religions. This approach is also found among some learned hindus.⁹ Tillich would approach the equality question in more

⁸Tillich, *ERQR*, p.38.

⁹Samartha highlights the pluralism expressed in three critical Hindu responses to a 1839 text claiming Christian superiority. These orthodox hindus argued for *mataikya* (the unity of all religions) and *matavirodha* (the noncontradictoriness of the religions) on the basis of three hindu concepts: *dharma* suggesting plurality on account of the diversity of human nature; *adhikara* (aptitude, competence, eligibility) refering to the reason for a person being born (birth being no accident) in a particular religion, namely that of performing the required *sadhana* (discipline); and *adhiakarabheda* (differences in aptitude) being not a matter of choice but given by God. (S.J. Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow", p.74 and p.86 n.18)

dialectical terms, that each religion shares with every other religion the sense of ultimacy and absoluteness of revelation on the one hand. At this level religions are seen in their transparency to the ultimate and hence there is a certain affirmation of their unity rather than equality. On the other hand the concrete character of symbols and religious expressions must be judged. So there is no equality at this level in any positive way; negatively, all equally stand under judgment.

The criterion of every faith is the ultimacy of the ultimate which it tries to express. The self-criticism of every faith is the insight into the relative validity of the concrete symbols in which it appears.¹⁰

The dynamic character of religion demands dialogue as the way of mutual renewal and the possibility of inclusive theology and inclusive community. Tillich's statement of the basis on which dialogue should be take place, reflects his religion-culture correlation, his revelation-religion dynamic and the tension he has drawn between the larger and narrower concepts of religion:

A dialogue between representatives of different religions .. first presupposes that both partners acknowledge the value of the other's religious conviction (as based ultimately on the revelatory experience), so that they consider the dialogue worthwhile. Second, it presupposes that each of them is able to represent his own religious basis with conviction, so that the dialogue is a serious confrontation. Third, it presupposes a common ground which makes both dialogue and conflicts possible, and fourth, the openness of both sides to criticisms directed against their own religious basis.¹¹

All the three methodological principles with their ultimacy and concrete elements are implied in all the four presuppositions. The ultimacy element is implied in the first and third presuppositions in stronger terms, as "conviction" and "common ground" are possible only with reference to the ultimate, the unconditional. The mutual dynamics between the ultimacy and concrete elements is stronger in the second and fourth presuppositions, as representing one's faith and accepting criticisms from the dialoguing partner demand the comparison of cultural forms of one tradition with

¹⁰Tillich, *DF*, p.123.

¹¹Tillich, *CEWR*, p.62.

another on the one hand and constantly evaluating the nature of ultimate reality that emerges at every stage of the dialogue against one's own present understanding as a way towards developing new models on the other hand.

Tillich speaks about real criticism of the other; not just self-criticism in the presence of the other. M. Gandhi, despite his high regard for the Sermon on the Mount and other New Testament parts, does not appreciate dialogue in its proper sense because he saw Christianity (not just the acts of the colonizers) offering nothing positive to India but providing the occasion for Hinduism to reform itself.¹² Self-criticism in the context of dialogue is a positive thing because it helps one rediscover forgotten truths of one's own tradition. But to dismiss any positive influence from another tradition, as Gandhi does, is either an expression of Hindu superiority or a statement based on the view that religion is both a private and a non-rational affair. What underlies Gandhi's statement cannot be resolved here, but it must be pointed out that the latter is often emphasized as a deterrent against dialogue, for the fear that there would be a communal breakdown rather than understanding. Dialogue being serious encounter, one is free to criticize the other. In this event there will be a "fair valuation of the encountered religions and quasi-religions" as an outcome of mutual judging.¹³

The principal principles of "openness" and "receptivity" that had characterized Christianity in its formative period,¹⁴ are of importance for Tillich in the *new formative period*, when Christians need to respond to both the religions proper and the quasi-religions. In that early period, Christianity had interacted with other religions and philosophies such that

¹²See Ignatius Jesudasan, *A Gandhian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984, p.131.

¹³Tillich, *CEWR*, 94.

¹⁴Tillich, *CEWR*, p.83.

Christianity judged, was judged, and accepted judgment. The dynamic life it showed was nourished by the tension between judging the encountered religions in the strength of its foundation, and accepting judgment from them in the freedom its foundation gives.¹⁵

Tillich is clear that judgment happens at two levels: *within* and *between* religions. Sometimes he sees the process of criticism in three moments: "criticism, counter-criticism and self-criticism".¹⁶

The dialogical mode of sharing and understanding truth is itself an application of the dialectical method. There is mutual acceptance and mutual judging, which leads to identifying what unites these two positions by transcending them. We shall now see how this method characterizes Tillich's pluralism.

Dialectical Pluralism

The dialectical method is consistently used by Tillich in his theology. He finds it adequate because he sees polar elements in existence, in the Ground of being, in the revelatory situation, in the epistemological situation, and in the universal structure of being. He sees the divine relating to humans in dialectical terms with its unconditioned yes and unconditioned no. This dialecticality that characterizes every religion gives each religion the right to dialogue with another religion in equal terms. In fact the concrete meeting of religions should help in the identifying of these unconditioned yes-es and unconditioned no-s. This dialectical relation between "Religion" and "religion", which Tillich consistently seeks to explore, can be the basis of our suggestion that Tillich's theology of religions is a *universal theology of religions*, but one which must bear the limitations of Tillich's concrete Christian standpoint.

¹⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, pp.82-83.

¹⁶Tillich, *CEWR*, p.89.

It is possible to think in terms of and to develop a universal theology of religions if concrete religions express common features. Hick identifies salvation/enlightenment/liberation as the common concern of the major religions, arising from the fact of the unique perceptions of ultimate reality.¹⁷ Similarly Knitter sees a soteriological concern underlying all religions, and suggests "the promotion of liberation" by the religions. This, for him, is likely to result in "common judgments concerning what is true or false, or what is preferable, among different religious claims or practices".¹⁸ Arriving at such consensus from the depth of each religion is a validation of the fact of the universality of the soteriological concern, and hence the legitimacy of a universal theology of religions. We saw Tillich expressing the soteriological concern as having central importance for theology, namely the soteriological event of the movement from existence to essence. That for Tillich this soteriological event is not limited to Christianity but is universal is not fully appreciated for instance by Knitter. Hence he sees Tillich subscribing to the theory of "general revelation" in terms of his concept of ultimate concern, which is claimed by him to be a driving force in every one.¹⁹ And Tillich is criticized for elevating the revelation of Christ above other revelations, for suggesting that other religions "*know*" true salvation only through the Christ revelation, which is free of idolatry as well. Knitter's interpretation of Tillich's Christological statements miss the point that although Tillich regards the symbols of the Christ and the Cross as "final revelation", the *form* of the revelation is relativized before the ground or substance of revelation. In other words, the Christ as final revelation functions on behalf of the ultimate with unconditioned yes and unconditioned no to the specific religious experience or

¹⁷John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, pp.69, 80, 87.

¹⁸Paul Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions", John Hick and Paul Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, p.190.

¹⁹Knitter, *No Other Name?*, pp.98-99.

expression for Christians, because the Christ revelation is actual only for Christians as we saw in the last chapter. This dialectic that Tillich maintains between the unconditioned and its actual function with its yes-es and no-s in the particular contexts is a general principle applicable to all religions and secular ideologies. Tillich's pluralism might be called dialectical pluralism on this basis.

Dialectical pluralism on the one hand appreciates all religions as based on revelation and expressing itself in historical and cultural life. On the other hand dialectical pluralism also demands the working of the the holy as ought-to-be for transformation of life in all respects in the religions - such transformation in radical ways being possible by the coming together of religions.

The dialectical method must be accepted as a method of describing the movements of life and history in their inner tensions, contrasts, and contradictions and in their trend toward more embracing unities. But the distortion of the dialectical method into a universal mechanism of calculable processes has nothing to do with reality and with the original meaning of the method. There are dialectical elements belonging to a given structure which drive beyond this structure.²⁰

Dialectical pluralism can be seen to be based on Tillich's theology of culture which is a theological analysis of the situation such that systematic theology might provide answers through its symbols. But dialectical pluralism demands a further theological attempt to analyze and provide theological answers in the light of the history of religions. Thus Tillich envisages "a new religious synthesis which is, like everything concrete, inclusive and exclusive at the same time and which therefore establishes a theological circle, just as Christianity does".²¹

This proposal of Tillich is possible through dialogue. Tillich shows the importance of the "frontier" or "boundary" situation which allows

²⁰Tillich, *PE*, pp.258-259.

²¹Tillich, *PTTB*, p.131.

a crossing and return, a repetition of return and crossing, a back-and-forth -- the aim of which is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.²²

John Dunne takes up Tillich's method and applies it in relation to the religions. Dunne states: "Passing over and coming back, it seems, is the spiritual adventure of our time."²³ The theological task is for Tillich dialectical, and hence rejects a syncretistic approach, that is the way of abstracting similar meanings from equivalent examples, which leads to "depriv[ing] the examples of their concreteness and reduc[ing] their meaning to an empty generality (e.g., a revelation which is neither Jewish nor Christian, neither prophetic nor mystical)".²⁴ Tillich's proposal is that Christianity should draw attention to the larger concept of religion, and regrets that "Christianity has become a religion instead of remaining a center of crystallization for all positive religious elements after they have been subjected to the criteria implied in this center."²⁵ Concrete religions are needed to give concrete expression to faith, but the Protestant principle is equally important to judge concrete religion. Kung too opts for a dialectical approach. He reflects Tillich's approach when he suggests a "tension-rich *synthesis*": "the goal is not a compounding of various features from various religions, nor a mingling of gods (theocracy), nor a fusing of religions, but rather, a dialectical "transcending" (*Aufheben*) of conflicts through inner mediation, which at once includes affirming, denying, and overcoming antagonistic positions."²⁶ Gilkey's approach is not much different from Tillich's: "A dialectic or paradox combining and interweaving both one part absoluteness and two parts relativity, *a relative absoluteness*, represents a posture essential to public and political praxis".²⁷

²²Tillich, "Frontiers" in *FR*, p.53.

²³J. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth*, New York: Sheldon Press, 1972, p.vii.

²⁴Tillich, *STI*, p.107.

²⁵Tillich, *CEWR*, p.84.

²⁶Kung, "A Christian Response", p.180.

²⁷L. Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications", John Hick and Paul Knitter (ed.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, London: SCM, 1987, p.47.

And Tillich certainly does not fall into a relativism that Ogden thinks threatens the pluralist approach. Ogden points out that pluralists are employing some normative principle tacitly to say that all religions are valid, if they are not to fall into complete relativism. And this norm belongs to one particular religion or philosophy.²⁸ So the way of overcoming the relativist danger of pluralism on the one side and the absolutist position itself together with the absolutist tendencies of "*monistic* inclusivism" on the other side is, for Ogden, a "*pluralistic* inclusivism"²⁹ "that religions other than Christianity can also be formally true even if, in point of fact, none of them actually is true or has as yet been shown to be so in a reasoned way".³⁰ Ogden makes a difference between the *is* true in relation to Christianity and *can* in relation to other religions. The *is* is affirmed to counter relativism. One way by which Ogden tries to overcome the special claim that he makes for Christianity is in terms of his Christology from below. He distinguishes his inclusivism which sees the Christ-event as *representative* of salvation and not as the absolutistic or monistic inclusivisms which see it as *constitutive* of salvation. "The Christ event cannot be the cause of salvation because its only cause, and the cause of this event itself, is the boundless love of God of which this event is the decisive re-presentation."³¹

In contrast to Ogden's pluralistic inclusivism, Tillich's approach can be called an inclusivistic pluralism, for Tillich's position is basically pluralist in that it affirms formally that all religions are true in terms of their revelatory character. Only in terms of their concrete manifestations are religions distorted. Tillich's pluralism however takes on the special character of being inclusivist in the sense of

²⁸S. Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion* ..., pp.70-7.

²⁹S. Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion* ..., pp.x-xi.

³⁰S. Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion* ..., p.83; and p.84.

³¹S. Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion* ..., p.93; and pp.84-93. Ogden, however, gives constitutive significance to the Christ for the Christian religion by constituting the word and sacraments as the "means of salvation". (*ibid.*, p.98)

appreciating and integrating concrete forms belonging to others with one's own, a possibility in Tillich's dialogical approach. Inclusivism used in relation to pluralism, as we are suggesting here, is free from the general or absolutistic inclusivism, which basically denies the permanent value of the forms belonging to traditions other than the absolute one. The dialectical approach which inclusivistic pluralism thus includes a creative side with the critical side, just as the Protestant principle has a primarily critical role but yet involving a creative role.

In essence, Tillich's pluralism is radical in its affirmation of the plurality of religions and standpoints. It affirms unconditionally the universal structure of being on the one hand, and seeks to seeing the manifestation of the ground of being in every religious and cultural tradition on the other hand. This affirmation of both the universal and the concrete is the basis of Tillich critical, constructive and inclusivistic approach to the religions, seeking to understand them and to interpret them adequately with reference to the existential and historical questions of the time.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that Tillich is a pluralist of a kind which acknowledges the universal character of religion but always expressed concretely. It is a case of "the one and the many" or the one *in* the many. In regard to theological enquiry, "the one", or religion in universal terms, is never available as such, and hence any idea of a common core or common religious frame is rejected by theologians who insist on their historicist and empiricist assumptions. Tillich's approach is that the universal is in the concrete, in every concrete religion, and hence the universal can be constructed through systematic and historical investigations of a concrete religion together with other concrete religions. The *common basis* that Tillich proposed was first appreciated in this study in terms of his concept of religion.

The concept of religion has helped to identify religion in essential terms, which recognizes that a religious concept like every other concept *includes, interprets* and *hides* a number of concrete facts. But it is a necessary part of the cognitive function of culture.¹ Theology cannot avoid this task of framing concepts, according to Whitehead, for that is the way of "discarding artificial abstractions or partial metaphors" and of "evolving notions which strike more deeply into the heart of reality".² We have shown that this task is important for Tillich too, and that such a concept, religion as ultimate concern, is identified and claimed to be adequate (the showing to be adequate being carried out in a number of sections in the study) to the religions proper and the quasi-religions. This definition itself is pluralist because instead of pointing out any qualitative or level distinctions between religions, Tillich has shown that all concrete religions have the larger definition as their basis but have a narrower concept which is unique to them. In systematic terms, Tillich has identified

¹Tillich, *ST* III, p.75.

²A.N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p.131.

religious reservation and religious obligation as present in religions and cultural movements with varying emphases.

Despite the larger definition's formal character, which means that the same condition has to be met by every religion to be regarded a religion including Christianity, if any finality were to be claimed for the larger definition then a claim for Tillich's pluralism will come under some threat, because the larger definition is taken from the Judaeo-Christian tradition in the first instance. But the fact that Tillich does not claim finality for his larger definition and does not simply qualify and categorize experiences and interpretations which meet this larger definition as religious, he is not a weak pluralist. In fact he suggests a mutual influencing of the larger and narrower definitions, which means that the larger definition is open to revision. The *common basis* that the larger definition provides is important because a claim of "plurality" rather than mere "difference" in relation to the concrete religions is possible only on such a ground. An affirmation of plurality without such a definition will be one made on the basis of non-religious criteria, which usually are political or cultural criteria.

Then, in Chapter II, Tillich's two-fold characterization of the divine which is found in every divine-human encounter, namely, the holy as present (or the holy that gives) and the holy as the ought-to-be (or the holy that demands) was considered. The role of these two elements were shown to be present in each religion, although in somewhat broken terms and hence the predominance of one of the elements, giving rise to a typology. The elements seeking fulfilment in a higher type was seen as the possible highest type in the typology, and in principle its realization is not excluded from any concrete religion. Tillich's attempt in respect of the typology anticipated the correlation of the systematic and the historical, which we discussed in the last chapter. The typology showed the possibility of observing some *systematic* character in the mutual functions of the two aspects of the holy in the concrete, *historical* religions. It

is constructed on the basis of theological analysis and with a certain familiarity with the history of religions.

In Chapter III, Tillich's analysis of theology of religions positions were analyzed in dialectical terms. The two polar positions of absolutism and relativism were discussed and their respective merits and demerits were identified. These polar positions were for Tillich the bases to see a higher approach in universalism. Two forms of it, absolutist universalism and relativist universalism were discussed. It was evident that Tillich's approach was demanding a dialectic of the universal and the concrete in more rigorous terms.

In Chapter IV, four criteria in Tillich were identified and discussed so as to determine the nature of Tillich's pluralism. The criteria, namely revelation, God, the Christ and the Protestant principle, showed Tillich dialectically affirming the immanence of the divine in human existence, in culture and in concrete religions, and also dialectically judging every concrete form. This meant a clear authenticating of every religion in the name of the ultimate, neither raising one religion above others nor seeing each religion as a mere function of culture.

And finally in Chapter V, we appreciated Tillich's dialectical method in terms of three important analyses significant for his systematic theology as well as his theology of religions. The kerygma-situation correlation suggested Tillich's openness to expressing the kerygma in the light of the concrete religious symbols and experiences of one's tradition and in the light of the cultural self-interpretations of the time. Then the theoretical frame most useful for theology's reflection of its subject matter in universal terms was identified as an ontology, and it was discussed. Then we moved on to discuss the systematic-historical correlation to see the mutual importance of a structural frame that is needed to interpret history, and concrete historical engagement to verify and revise the structure. These then formed the basis to identify Tillich's

pluralism as a dialectical pluralism, which on the one hand affirms universality and on the other hand particularity. Being a dialectical and a systematic approach, there is no hierarchy of the universal over the relative, nor a relativism in which the universal is made meaningless. Tillich's approach affirms the possibility of approaching the one from the other; not being bound to a pattern of moving only from one end to the other. Thus the common basis of the religious principle and the plurality of forms, which together constitute the frame for affirming Tillich's pluralism, point in the direction of a radical and critical pluralism.

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